The House

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The House

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Summary

Late one snowy night, Hannibal drives through Wolf Trap on his way home with new meat for dinner. Yet, just when he thinks his excitement is over for the night, a young omega jumps out in front of the Bentley and promptly bounces off the hood. A combination of curiosity and his natural alpha instincts have Hannibal taking the boy in, but, when he learns the boy has been abused almost his entire life, Hannibal decides to do what he does best; dispatch the rude.

Notes

This is a total re-write of an old fic. To be perfectly honest, it is an entirely different story

Chapter 1

A mysteriousness lingered in the night sky; an inky blanket of clouds which occasionally let the moon peak out to bathe Wolf Trap in a silvery glow. Hannibal drove slowly along the snowy road; the snow fell more slowly than it had earlier in the day, but a powdery later still coated the desolate stretch of road. Trees lined the road on the Bentley's left; thick and dark with an almost supernatural eeriness, the plethora of trees that could have hidden a whole world behind them. Hannibal cared nothing for any of this though, not when he was so eager to get home.

He hated Wolf Trap due to it being in the middle of nowhere with nothing of any real note – to him at least. However, it was one of the isolated farmhouses that his now former patient called home. Oswald Roderick hadn't been under Hannibal's care for very long but he'd certainly left an impression on the psychiatrist and it hadn't been a positive one. Ultimately that was how Hannibal had ended up needing to refrigerate the kidneys and select cuts he'd removed from the rude man. In truth Doctor Lecter had been rather pleased to get rid of his annoying patient and to have fresh meat for dinner; not that he'd quite decided what to prepare yet.

The Bentley's headlights illuminated the foggy road, the only light other than the moon for miles. Frankly the doctor preferred driving at night, it gave him a sense of peace and solidarity which was far more calming than the rush the day held. That was, of course, until a figure darted out from those thick trees. An obsidian shadow that simply rushed from the tree line with the speed of a spooked gazelle with no thought to any motorists. In an instant the shadow was in front of Hannibal's Bentley which promptly smashed into the figure knocking him to the ground. Whoever it was had been fortunate Hannibal had been cautious of ice and therefore been driving slowly meaning they'd only bounced off the hood rather than being completely run over.

Hannibal sighed internally; 'wonderful' he thought as the vehicle came to a total stop. For a moment he debated just carving out anything edible from this midnight jogger as penance for their idiocy; it was rude, not to mention dangerous, to just go running around country roads on such a snowy night. Yet he was a doctor and had a duty of care.

Hannibal smoothly slipped from of the driver's seat and out into the darkness of night, his breath turned to mist as all the warmth that had built up inside his car was quickly replaced by ice-cold night air, and that cold scent that came with snow that everybody knew but couldn't really describe. Slowly he walked to the hood of his car where his headlights lit the snowy road while he rubbed his hands together for some heat. Suddenly Hannibal realized that he was in the middle of nowhere.

When the shadow came into full view Hannibal stopped dead in the shine of the headlights and lifted a questioning eyebrow. There, in the middle of the road, wasn't a shadow but a small, terrified teenager. A small, terrified teenage *omega* dressed in only a bedraggled pair of jeans. Nostrils flared as the sweet scent flooded his alpha lungs. The boy was covered in scars, some old while others were newer, there were even bite marks trailing up and down his pale torso. Some heathen of an alpha had only just been able to resist mating the poor teenager. Hannibal couldn't prevent the wave of pity that washed over him as his alpha DNA kicked in; as it forced him to protect and care.

Male omegas were rare – not unheard of, but certainly rare. In some countries they were considered a symbol of status for alphas; to mate a male omega was a display of power and prowess. That said, in other countries, many thought male omegas to be abnormalities or even abominations in some cases. There had been religious groups who'd asserted male omegas were so unnatural they were clearly the Devil's work; Hannibal hadn't ever been one to place too much stock in the words of zealots and racists though. Male omegas weren't evil or wrong, they were just unique like those born with heterochromia.

In need of air not scented with scared omega, Hannibal purposely walked to the rear of his car and popped open the Bentley's trunk. He knew the omegan boy wouldn't move; the proverbial deer caught in headlights made literal.

The tall doctor returned to the teenager with a red woollen blanket in his gloved hands; an item always kept in his trunk for emergencies. Despite the omega's shuffling and hurried attempts to flee backward along the snowy tarmac, Hannibal managed to snare him in the soft fabric and not a moment too soon. The boys skin felt deathly icy when Hannibal finally managed to lift the boy up in a princess hold. This little omega struggled and pushed at the doctor but Hannibal was too strong and there wasn't any way in hell he'd be able to disobey a thoroughbred alpha.

The Bentley's back seat was where Hannibal settled his evening's surprise before he slipped back into the driver's seat. He took notice of the petrified expression on the omega's face via the rear-view mirror and pondered what had happened to this teenager. Inside the lit car Hannibal saw the boy's blue-tinted lips and the way his hair clearly hadn't been washed in weeks. How anybody

could treat an omega so shamefully was beyond Hannibal. Omegas should have been cared for, treated with kindness and reverence, not whatever cruelty this teen had clearly been through. One thing was really rather apparent to the psychiatrist though; he'd find out who had hurt the boy. Omega's were beautiful creatures, especially the rare male ones, that should have been treasured *never* harmed.

As expected the boy didn't speak as Hannibal continued on down the road toward home, which was still an hour away, just sat there and shivered while he clung to the red blanket. What would Hannibal do with this boy he wondered.

~X~

The Bentley turned into the garage of Hannibal's elegant home shortly after the snow had finally ended and, as expected, the omega hadn't made a single sound during the entire journey. The suit-clad doctor silenced the engine's purr and went to the back passenger door to retrieve his blanket-wrapped guest. With a bump of Hannibal's hip the door slammed shut and he took the omega into his home, up the stairs and into one of the guest rooms where he settled the boy down atop the bed which had been made up with green sheets.

Hannibal flicked on the lights then caught the boy's eyes as he pointed to a mahogany door behind himself.

"You can shower in there." Hannibal explained in the calmest tone he could muster. "I shall get you some clothes."

The teenager with curly chestnut locks just stared at the floor with a furrowed brow. Clearly this boy had no idea what Hannibal was doing or why he'd chosen to be kind; all he knew was that the man who'd brought him home was an alpha and a powerful one at that. Hannibal didn't linger though, not when the room had already started to fill with omega pheromones.

It certainly took quite some time, but eventually the young omega found the courage to make his way into the bathroom and into the shower. Warm water cascaded over his bruises to sooth some of the pain he felt. He'd long ago lost track of how many of the things littered his body; some were horrid shades of greens and yellows while others had turned a sickly purple-black. Over his left shoulder several had merged together to form one huge blotch. The scabbed bite marks ripped at the corners when he moved a little too quickly and he had one hell of a dehydration headache. His feet bled from running barefoot through the woods and most of his left side had grazes from where he'd skidded along the road when he'd bounced off the Bentley's hood. Soil, blood and sweat washed down over the tiled shower floor staining it a murky brown. The omega hadn't known quite how much blood and filth coated his lean form but it was enough to feel like a second skin flooding off of him.

He couldn't bring himself to think, knew that if he did he'd remember the pain. The omega wanted to cry but his tears had dried up so long ago when he'd been a child. Even before he'd presented as an omega he'd only known pain; his father hadn't been the nicest of alphas, then, after his secondary gender had made itself known things had only gotten worse.

The teenager shook his head forcefully to banish his inner thoughts. He'd got no idea how long he was permitted to be in the shower and had no intention of angering this thoroughbred alpha in his own, very large, house. The second the water started to run clear again and the twigs were out of his curly hair the boy shut off the water, left the shower and enwrapped himself with a fluffy towel. He knocked water from his hair as best he could and left the bathroom only to ground to a dead

stop when blue eyes found the alpha with the strange accent stood in the centre of the room. He could practically feel the danger which dripped off of this alpha and his heart dropped. 'Please, no, please not again' screamed his mind, 'please don't'.

Heavenly blue orbs glanced down then to see the folded clothes in Hannibal's hands, and a wave of shame washed over him. All alphas were dangerous but this one was different from the others he'd known. Hannibal clearly spotted the omega's uneasiness because is simply set the folded pile down at the foot of the bed.

"When you are dressed you should come downstairs, please. I will have something ready for you to eat."

Hannibal's maroon eyes looked the omega over as if assessing something; his eyes lingered on the boy's flanks were his ribs threatened to become visible. He decided something but the omega didn't want to risk asking questions. He could do nothing but nod in agreement which Hannibal seemed pleased with because he left without another word.

Once he'd dried off properly and put on the too-large clothes – which were delightfully warm and soft – then tiptoed down the grand stairs and, after a moment, he followed the faint sound of movement through the dining room and into what turned out to be a kitchen. He'd done his best to hurry, to not keep the alpha waiting lest he be forced to face the consequences; consequences when an alpha was involved hadn't ever been good.

A wonderful scent of cooking meat hit the teenager as he shuffled barefoot further into the stunning kitchen. This alpha wasn't just a thoroughbred, he was rich and powerful too. Said alpha stood at the gas cooktop preparing what the omega quickly realized was ham omelets. The ham wasn't really ham but the boy didn't need to know that. The suit-clad man looked at home cooking, he'd never seen an alpha cook before; in his experience it was something alpha's deemed beneath them. This one though, he looked so elegant and practised.

"Let us begin with easy questions, yes?" Asked Hannibal without looking up. "When was the last time you ate and what was it?"

"… At least a day ago." He finally responded quietly. "And it was an apple."

Hannibal nodded to himself. His suspicion that the boy wasn't regularly fed had proven true but at least it had provided more nutrients than a piece of bread. With a finesse he'd cultivated, Hannibal plated the simple omelets and carried them into the dining room fully aware the boy would follow like the little puppy he was. Once the plates were on the table and the kitchen lights were off Hannibal gestured for the omega to sit, a silent order which was quickly obeyed.

"Please, eat." The boy didn't need asking twice, clearly he had spirit. "Continuing with our easy questions, I would like to know your name." Blue eyes flickered to the alpha a moment. "My name Is Doctor Hannibal Lecter. Forgive my rudeness for not introducing myself earlier."

The teen chewed his food for a long moment as nerves tried to overtake him; he balanced on the edge of remaining and running away. Thoroughbreds had great control over themselves though so if he stayed calm and didn't give the alpha a reason to become angry then he'd be fine.

"… Will." He hated that he couldn't keep the traumatized lilt from his voice.

Hannibal smiled. "It is very nice to meet you, Will."

The boy didn't respond and while Hannibal would have normally found that rude he decided to let it slide for the night.

"What were you running from, Will?" Silence hung between the pair for a moment as the air thickened. Hannibal could practically feel Will's internal panic. "Will, please answer me."

Will took a breath. "The… House."

"What sort of house?" He inquired before taking another bite of his omelet.

Will shrugged. "Just the House."

Hannibal's curiosity wanted him to ask further questions and, while he knew the boy would resist, those questions had to be asked.

"Could you tell me about the House, Will?" His tone remained calm and genuine as he ate; words filled with concern designed to put the omega at ease.

Silence lingered between them for quite some time, so long in fact that Hannibal had started to suspect an answer wouldn't come, but, just as Hannibal had begun to work on his next strategy, the boy started to speak with his eyes locked his plate of half-eaten food.

"When I – when I presented my father … sold me. Men took me to the House and left me in a room. They – they gave me pills and alphas would – would -"

"Rape you." Hannibal supplied and Will could only nod. "Were these pills round and lilac or ovular and dark purple?"

"Ovular." Hannibal instantly recognized them as heat suppressants, cheap and illegal imitations of the real thing. Shameful was the only word Hannibal could use to describe them. "Master said … be - be good and they won't hurt me but they always did."

Hannibal felt a twinge inside his heart, usually he actually cared about others very little, but this sweet, traumatized omega seemed to pull him in without really trying. This omega was something special all wrapped up in a mystery.

"Master?"

Will didn't speak and Hannibal doubted he'd get any more from the boy that night if he went pushing now. Tears had welled up in Will's blue eyes and threatened to fall; tears the boy tried to hide rather unsuccessfully and had thought himself incapable of. Hannibal couldn't deny his anger, it stirred around inside him but he kept his face blank; he'd not let his mask slip now, not when Will had just started to feel somewhat at ease around him.

"If you're finished, why don't you go upstairs. I'll be up in a minute to check you over and make sure you're not injured. Then you can get some sleep." Will glanced up as if for confirmation that he'd got permission. "It is all right, Will, go on. I assure you that you're safe here, I will not harm you. I promise."

Will had eaten almost all of his omelet and, while Hannibal hated wasted food, he'd let it slide just like with Will's earlier rudeness.

"Thank – thank you."

A honest smile pulled itself onto Hannibal's sharp features and, without another word being uttered, Will slowly rose from his chair and fled back upstairs.

The cannibal wasn't stupid, very far from it, he was well aware that Will didn't trust him and that was to be expected. Ultimately, Hannibal was just a strange alpha who'd hit him with a rather beautiful Bentley then taken him home like a child with a stray puppy. Hannibal honestly didn't blame Will for not trusting him, would have been disappointed in the omega if he had blindly trusted him. Still, Will had decided it a safer option to stay with the unknown alpha than take his chances alone or return to the House.

Chapter 2

Will lay on the tiny bed inside his equally tiny room, or at least it had once been a bed, now it had become a filthy and rickety mass of twigs with a tattered mattress atop it. The place permanently stank of three things; dried blood, sweat and damp. If that was just Will's room or the whole of the House, Will neither knew nor cared all that much; regardless he'd gone mostly nose blind to it years ago as a child.

Silence hung as both his protector and his betrayer; gave him instant notice of anyone who decided to walk the halls but also left him alone with his inner thoughts. The omega had wrapped himself up in what had originally been a white sheet while he prayed no one else ever set foot in his box of a room. His prayer never came true though; fate was never so kind and, honestly, some days Will wondered if fate had a personal vendetta against him. Perhaps Will had done something barbaric in a former life or sold his soul to the Devil and this was his punishment. Only the tiny window covered in bars told Will how long he'd been there – well, that and the weekly baths he was given, but that was a double edge sword when he realized he'd been in the hell hole yet another year.

Suddenly the heavy slam of the security gate at the stairwell sounded and footfalls echoed down the hall almost savagely. He was desperate for them to just stop at another door but that was a pipe dream, they approached his door and Will knew what was coming. Each step rang inside his mind as though he were being slapped in the face with a brick.

The moment the door opened Will held his breath in some bizarre attempt to appear dead. Over the threshold stepped a tall black man in a dark blue suit with an intimidating smirk on his naturally hard face. The alpha growled deep in the back of his throat, a sound which had Will curl in on himself.

"I'm waiting." He hissed as the door was kicked shut behind him and the magnetic lock clicked back into place.

Will shivered but obeyed the alpha. As an omega Will had little to no choice in anything he did. If life had taught Will anything it was that alphas were at the top of the food chain controlling everything while omegas just did as they were told like the slaves they were forced to be. What Will wouldn't have given to have presented as a beta.

The omega slipped from his bed and crawled to kneel before the alpha. He had no idea how but it was always worse when the House's master, Jack Crawford, touched him; made him feel owned instead of just filthy and used. Over the years he'd learned not to speak or squirm, it always hurt less that way but only a little. His self-proclaimed master grinned as he freed himself from the confines of his suit pants then gripped Will by the neck and forced the omega to where he wanted him most. The air was nocked from Will's lungs and yet more bruises would soon form on his skin. Fingernails dug into his abused flesh, dug deep with a sadistic pleasure to the point they left crescent cuts

Will had suffered through the agony before but he never got used to it, no one could have. Whatever he'd done in that past life, whatever harm he'd caused, Will was truly sorry and ready for his punishment to end.

~X~

Bolt upright sat the young omega in Hannibal's indulgently comfortable guest bed. Sweat had beaded all over his body resulting in an almost sparkly appearance and his lungs sucked in desperately needed air. It had just been a dream of those horrid times but it seemed Will's body refused to accept that. Though he'd tried to control his body, Will soon found himself rushing into the bathroom where he properly dropped to his knees before the toilet and threw up the remains of what had once been a lovely omelet. Will's slender body convulsed violently, panted desperately and retched intensely until his stomach finally calmed; a strand of saliva snapped as he collapsed on his side against the cold tiles. His lungs and esophagus ached, screamed at him, but Will couldn't bring himself to care, not when he was too focused on getting the sweat off of him.

Carefully the teenager pushed himself to his feet and flipped on the light almost blinding himself in the process. Blue eyes blinked rapidly for a few seconds as he wobbled on the spot before he flushed the toilet, stripped off his borrowed pyjamas and helped himself to another shower. The spray was almost sinfully hot and for a moment Will worried Hannibal would just appear to yank him out of the shower for the audacity of not seeking permission. The alpha didn't appear though so Will managed to wash away his sweat-drenched fear leaving something which resembled calm. He stood there letting the water do its work for what seemed like hours with his forehead rested against the stunning white tiles.

All of the omega's fears burst forth anew though when knuckles suddenly rapped on the bathroom door. The noise startled Will out of the tiny blip of peace he'd managed to carve out for himself; dread pushed peace aside as he caught sight of the window and realized the sun had started to rise.

"Will," the doctor called out. "I brought you some clean clothes."

He heard the alpha push the bathroom door open and watched him move into the room through the frosted glass. Frosted glass, Will hadn't ever known how grateful he could be for such a thing; a perfect separation between omega and alpha.

"Everything is beside the basin." Hannibal said calmly and then, without another word almost as though he'd never been there to begin with, he vacated the room.

Will slipped down the shower to his knees as relief washed over him. The doctor was an odd one, Will knew that for sure, and a voice at the back of his mind screamed at him that Hannibal had only allowed the second shower to ensure the scent of all other alphas had been firmly washed away. Despite that voice in the back of his head Will made the rather surprising decision, to him anyway, not to believe it. This alpha doctor had never met him before and yet, without question, had taken the omega into his home and treated him with more care and respect than Will had ever experienced before. If Hannibal had just wanted to use him then he'd had a multitude of opportunities. Maybe it was naïve – no, it was certainly naïve to put even an ounce of faith in a thoroughbred alpha with an unknown quantity of wealth, but Will knew this alpha was different to those who frequented the House.

Eventually he shut off the water and dried himself with a towel. The clothes Hannibal had left for him were too big but that had been expected since the alpha was taller, more broad and muscular than Will. However, they smelt faintly of Hannibal and while that voice inside his mind told him it was an alpha's sneaky act of possession Will found himself quietly enjoying Hannibal's scent.

Hoping his decision to give the doctor the benefit of the doubt hadn't been a mistake, Will padded down stairs feeling a little more comfortable moving around than he had the previous night. He couldn't let his guard down, but something in him wanted to believe there were good alphas in the world.

Upon entering the kitchen Will found one of the counters topped with a glass of freshly squeezed orange juice and two small yellowish pills. Suddenly that voice inside him burst back to full volume to curse him for his idiocy. 'How were you so stupid? A *nice* alpha is just a fairy story!' Will swallowed audibly. Run, he needed to run. Although, instead of fleeing Will's feet stayed rooted to the spot while Hannibal went about filtering his coffee.

"What – what are these?"

Maroon orbs flicked to the pills then up to Will to flash him a soft smile; Will still saw the danger that lingered behind them though.

"They're a multivitamin." Hannibal explained as he poured himself a cup of coffee. "You clearly have not been eating nutritionally so these will do you some good. They'll help clean your body of the suppressants they had you on as well." Hannibal paused to sip his coffee and a blissful expression coated his sharp features; not that Will cared what the alpha looked like of course. "William, I know you have no real reason to trust me but I swear to you, I will not touch or hurt you like other alphas have. Please believe that." He pointed to the multivitamin. "I won't force you to take those, but as a doctor I truly recommend you do."

As if giving Will time to think things over Hannibal set his coffee cup down and went to the camel-colored armchair across the room to retrieve his blue suit jacket. He pulled it on to his strong frame then went back for his skilfully made coffee.

Will opened his mouth but no words slipped out. He'd never seen a multivitamin before so he'd no idea if Hannibal spoke the truth.

"I will return by eight o'clock as I have no late appointments." Said Hannibal once he'd finished his coffee. "Your breakfast is in the oven staying warm. Please eat and make yourself at home." Will's mouth fell open. "Stay out of the basement though, it is dangerous down there. Other than that you may go anywhere in the house."

The Lithuanian man made to leave but paused when Will managed to squeak out words.

"Where are you going?"

"To my office." Hannibal told him simply. "I am a psychiatrist, Will. I'll be back later."

As if everything was all sorted Hannibal left the kitchen in favor of his work while Will stared questioningly at the pills. The alpha still hadn't hurt him and had apparently given him full run of his home. Had Hannibal placed trust in him or just assumed the omega too cowardly to leave?

Will sighed and spoke to himself. "Just take the damn things."

He'd chosen to think differently of Hannibal Lecter and Will presumed that if Hannibal had wanted to drug him that badly he'd have just stirred it into his juice. Having made up his mind, Will grabbed the two multivitamins and popped them into his mouth only to wash them down with the orange juice.

Yes, Doctor Hannibal Lecter wasn't like any other alpha Will had known and there wasn't any denying the danger hidden within the doctor, but Will got the feeling it wasn't aimed at him. Bizarrely Will had, rather quickly, started to think Hannibal Lecter a more protective alpha than a savage one. Oh how he hoped he wasn't deluding himself.

The teenager's attention turned to the contents of the oven when Will decided he wanted to think of something that wasn't Hannibal. His breakfast turned out to be a protein scramble, each bite of which was better than the last and helped his stomach to forget about the early morning's vomiting. Will might have even let out a little perturbed sigh when he finished the last bite. That breakfast had been the greatest thing he'd ever had the good fortune to consume though it was gone much too quickly.

After he'd finished his juice and washed the bowl and glass, because he couldn't leave a mess in an alpha's den, Will did his best to obey Hannibal and make himself at home. Relaxing proved to be a much harder task than it sounded considering he'd never been alone in the fancy home of an alpha before. Hell, Will had hardly been out of his room at the House apart from the fitness hour his master had always insisted upon.

Halls were wandered down as Will took in the artwork and ambiance. Hannibal's home seemed to linger somewhere between museum and professional kitchen; the place was a palace to someone who'd spent his life in a nine by nine, gray painted room. Much of the art and items Will didn't understand but everything looked like it had a story; a story Hannibal cared about. Soon the omega's attention turned from the art side of the house to the kitchen side. He returned to the dining room and sniffed at the strange line of herbs growing in boxes along the wall. The kitchen still smelt faintly of Hannibal's morning coffee and for a moment Will mourned the loss of his breakfast.

As Will wandered further through the alpha's mansion-like home he told himself it was research into a good escape plan, but really he just wanted to know more about his midnight savior. A piano-like instrument he'd never seen before made a strange plucking noise when he got up the courage to hit a key, but it was the level of detail the instrument had been painted with which really held Will's attention. Somebody had treated this instrument with such gentleness and care, had brought out the dark wood with golden lines. Something deep down inside Will envied this mysterious thing that wasn't a piano; why had someone loved an inanimate object more than his father had loved him? Blue eyes squeezed shut. 'Pathetic' he cursed himself. To be jealous of a musical instrument. He forced himself out of the room.

In a need of something to distract him, Will picked a door at random and simply went inside. Finding another large room full of expensive knick-knacks didn't surprise the omega in the slightest by this point. The walls were painted in a blue which reminded Will of the stream he'd fished in as a child, before he'd presented. Every wall was lined in bookshelves neatly filled with tomes, and Will felt himself smile. This was Hannibal's study it seemed.

Determined to keep his mind from that damn instrument, Will went to a section of books and pulled one out at random; *The Mysterious Island.* Back at the House an omega named Beverly had read to the younger omegas when their master had been feeling generous; a treat which kept them in line if anyone asked Will. He'd always enjoyed listening to Beverly though, she was kind and the only reason Will could read properly since he'd been taken literally the week he'd presented and never had an academically minded father.

Will slid down the wall beside the bookshelf and flipped open the tome to read. Hannibal had told him to make himself at home and with this novel Will may have stood a chance of obeying.

~X~

Almost every clock in the elegant home chimed quietly as if welcoming Hannibal back at the stroke of eight o'clock. Hannibal had always enjoyed being prompt; lateness was rudeness in his eyes. None of the lights were on though which had the doctor lifting an eyebrow in silent question.

"Hello?" He called to the darkness. "Will?"

After almost twenty seconds of no response a frown crossed his handsome features and Hannibal went in search. He moved silently through the house, not necessarily his intention but old habits died hard. The little omega was somewhere in the building, Hannibal could smell him faintly, so he followed his talented nose through the dark halls to his study. He smiled as he came to a stop in the open doorway; the sight of Will sat on the floor with a book and a single lamp providing light. The warming orange glow lit the boy half in shadow which showed off his beautiful omegan features wonderfully. Will's curly hair had become somewhat unruly in an enticing sort of way and needed cutting at some point – the sooner the better to be perfectly honest. Hannibal's clothing dwarfed him but at the same time Will had some how managed to nest himself inside them with almost child-like skill. Adorable, Hannibal decided, it was adorable. The best bit though, the best bit was the way the novel rested against Will's chest while the boy snored softly.

Quietly Hannibal slipped into the room as though he were nothing more than a shadow to flip the lamp off and plunge the study totally into darkness. The omega had left himself entirely at Hannibal's mercy, fortunately for Will though he wasn't on Hannibal's could-be victim list. Innocence dripped off of Will's sleeping form, an innocence which only added to Hannibal's adorable conclusion. Will didn't stir in the slightest; not when Hannibal crouched beside the boy, not when he took away the book or lifted Will up into his arms nor when he carried him up to the room Hannibal had internally dubbed as 'Will's room'.

Hannibal prided himself on keeping control of his body, on not giving in to base desires like lesser alphas, but Hannibal almost ran the last few feet to free himself of the omega's intoxicating pheromones and gently placed him on the bed. Now he'd showered and the stink of fear had faded, Will's true scent had started to reveal itself and it would only grow more pungent as the heat suppressants left his system. A heat would surely be in the boy's future. The guest room had already started to smell more of Will than anything else. Normally alpha scent would dominate, but Will's smell apparently had a way of intermingling with Hannibal's; and the doctor couldn't say he disliked it.

A future heat was something which concerned Hannibal though; a heat would put strain on the poor boy's weak body and, while Hannibal didn't think Will's life would be in danger, he had no desire to risk his safety. Another problem with a heat would be Hannibal's amazing sense of smell, because if Will smelt this good outside of a heat Hannibal didn't want to think of the resplendence Will would give off during one. Of course Hannibal wouldn't force himself on the boy, he had standards after all.

For a moment Hannibal stood by the bed watching the boy's slumber; the way his hair covered his eyes, the way Hannibal's t-shirt hung off of Will's lean frame and such sweet snores escaped him. Fully aware he couldn't linger over the omega all night, Hannibal covered Will over with the sheets and slipped out as silently as he'd entered. As a wealthy and sophisticated alpha Hannibal wouldn't ever admit it, but his movements were hastier than he'd have liked. Gods, that boy smelt so good.

A heat was coming and Hannibal knew that as inconvenient as it would be for him, it would be worse for Will.

Chapter 3

Hannibal was guilty of telling Will half-truths. When he'd informed the boy he'd got no late appointments it had suggested the idea of a normal work day, however, Hannibal had only had three patients and they'd all been and gone by just after noon. Hannibal had needed the rest of his day to quietly return to snowy Wolf Trap and search the area where he'd met Will. Even with the cold and smell of pine trees it hadn't taken Hannibal very long to pick up the vague remnant scent of Will's blood. The omega's feet had bled as he'd charged through the woods which had left the cannibal a rather helpful trail to follow; and follow he did, for almost an hour through the dense woodland with only the occasional bird tweet or startled deer for company. The path wasn't an easy one and it quickly became clear it could have only been travelled by someone filled with true fear. Hannibal didn't like the stink of fear on Will, it smelt toxic and ruined his natural beauty.

Suddenly the foul stench of alphas, omegas and betas slapped him square in the face; blood, sweat, semen and fear all blended together with the natural odors of the forest; it almost made Hannibal gag. It was too strong, too dominant to the point Hannibal couldn't follow Will any longer; they'd washed the boy from his nose. Rude. He tried to get passed it and find the sweet smell of Will again but he couldn't, he'd just end up going around in circles all night, so reluctantly Hannibal backed off until he caught a nose full of Will again and followed it back to the car. The whole trip had been a failure; well, maybe not entirely, after all he had confirmed Will's story – which had taken a while for Hannibal to dig out of him – and that something truly evil was going on in those woods.

Will wanted the others at the House rescued from their fate, but he'd been reluctant to trust police since so many of the alphas visiting the House were law enforcement. If word got back to Jack that cops were coming then he'd burn everything and bug out, it would just kill his friends. That left Will at a loss for what to do; he'd not decided if Hannibal could be trusted or not.

~X~

After he'd returned home and found Will in his study, Hannibal had put him to bed then gone to take a shower. His home had begun to smell of omega and Hannibal had to admit it blended so wonderfully with his own alpha scent. Stood there under the hot spray Hannibal found himself mentally preparing for Will's inevitable heat. On the one hand going into heat would prove that Will's body had flushed the heat suppressants from his system successfully. Although, on the other hand, Will going into heat after so long on suppressants would be a struggle for his body and could cause a plethora of medical issues, especially when Will had no alpha. Both sides had pros and cons, both sides were an option, but ultimately Will's well-being was at stake and the usually confident Hannibal Lecter couldn't quite decide what to do for the best.

Once he'd dried off and dressed Hannibal made his way downstairs and somehow found himself drinking a glass of Chianti in his dining room. Alone in the dark his mind still focused on the omega asleep upstairs. Getting rid of the boy was also an option, things would certainly be easier for the doctor if he did. Hannibal had a reputation to keep after all and having an underage omega living with him – an *unmated* omega living with him wouldn't aid that reputation. No! Hannibal

threw the idea away almost as quickly as his mind had conjured it up. He couldn't possibly be so cruel to this teen; it was wrong, it was selfish, it was rude.

With his wine glass empty, Hannibal decided he'd circle back around to the omega in the morning once he'd had some sleep. He took the glass through to the dishwasher then retired to his expansive bedroom for some much needed sleep. Slipping under silk sheets was a welcome comfort after spending so much of the day out in the icy woodland and one he basked in as he settled on his side.

For a few minutes he lay there awaiting sleep but then the gentle sound of approaching footsteps reached him. Though he didn't open his eyes Hannibal listened closely to the sweat-coated omega slowly tiptoe into his bedroom like a terrified lamb. Just like that every inch of Hannibal's room fell victim to Will's sweet scent.

"Hannibal?" The boy called out softly. "I'm sorry but-" He trailed off lamely as if regretting ever leaving his bed. For a moment Will swayed on the spot until he got up the courage to try again. "I had a nightmare. Could I – could I sleep in here with you please?"

Hannibal didn't role over, just spoke in that lovely accent of his. "Will you are safe in your room. No one can harm you, I promise."

Boundaries would be for the best but Will shuffled further into the room and Hannibal's nostrils flared.

"Please, Hannibal, I'll be quiet."

The doctor finally agreed. "All right, come on."

Footsteps crossed the room like a pitter-patter, then the sheets were lifted and Will slipped into Hannibal's large bed. A moment of hesitation lingered before the omega snuggled himself up to the doctor.

Hannibal couldn't just lay there and wait for the day Will's heat hit. He rolled onto his back which left Will cuddled up to him like a lover.

"Will," he began slowly, cutting through the silence. "Are you absolutely sure the pills you were being given were ovular?"

Will nodded. "Yes. Dark purple like an eggplant and oval."

"When was the last time they made you take them?"

The boy thought for a long moment but Hannibal waited patiently; that was polite.

"The day before I escaped. Morning, I think."

With a very uncharacteristic sigh, the cannibal sat himself up and shuffled down the bed to sit at the foot of it. His chest was bare, spattered in hair and showed off just how strong he truly was; a perfect depiction of a thoroughbred alpha. Will sat up as worry coated his handsome features, but Hannibal's well-built back was an image he'd not soon forget.

"Em … what's wrong, Hannibal?" The teenager asked as he started to fear he'd done something to upset the alpha.

"Do you know what those pills were, Will?" The boy shook his head and had Hannibal not chosen that moment to glance over his shoulder he'd not have noticed. "They're heat suppressants. A chemical which prevents an omega going into heat. Prolonged use of them alters the way your body functions, it damages you. Now you're off them though, your heats are free to come again and yours has decided to."

Quiet lingered while Will shifted to sit beside the alpha; just the two of them at the end of an unmade bed.

"What is heat?"

Hannibal's heart dropped like a stone into a lake. Sweet Will had no idea how his own body worked and it was all the House's fault.

The doctor sighed deeply; he felt like a parent explaining sex to his child for the first time, probably because that was more or less exactly what was happening.

"Will," he began gently so as not to spook the boy. "Essentially heat is when an omega's body, *your* body, prepares itself to have pups. Alphas and omegas are very different from betas, they can breed all year round, it's part of the reason they outnumber us. You and I need to wait for a heat or rut to conceive." Hannibal shuffled to face a confused Will fully. "The drugs prevent you being able to enter heat. So, the way I see it, we have two options. The first is I lock you in your bedroom when your heat comes with everything you'll need. It will be uncomfortable and you'll be desperate for an alpha; any alpha. The other option is for me to acquire more of the pills for you to take. However, you need to be aware long exposure to these chemicals can cause serious damage to your body. There have been those who reject their secondary gender as an omega and take them all their lives. These illegal versions can cause sterilization."

By now Will had practically curled in on himself as the weight of the situations settled on his shoulders.

"…. Would I have to be locked in?" He questioned quietly.

Hannibal nodded. "Yes, otherwise you'd come crawling and begging. It would be safer for me to stay far away from you as well. When in heat an omega gives off a lot of pheromones, you aren't affected by them since you don't need to be, and those pheromones would trigger my rut. Now, I have a great deal of willpower, I'll not give in easily but it is best to remove the temptation." In truth Hannibal wasn't entirely sure he'd be able to avoid losing control, he'd give it a damn good shot but Will smelt delightful outside of heat so he didn't want to poke the proverbial bear. "I have no desire to harm you, Will." The doctor tried desperately to fill that sentence with as much emotion as possible, it was his way of reassuring Will.

" … I don't want to be locked in again." Hannibal opened his mouth to speak but Will just carried on. "I'll take the drugs. Just … let me stay with you and – and don't lock the door."

The alpha's head tilted to the side slightly in askance. "Are you completely sure?"

Will nodded, it was clear he would do anything to prevent further imprisonment and, of course, to remain safely away from the House. Where better to hide from such evil people than in a rich alpha's impeccably decorated home?

"Very well, I shall get them for you post-haste."

The boy couldn't deny that actually being given a choice was truly meaningful to him. Choices weren't something Will had been privy to since he'd presented. Alphas had always treated Will like something to be used, nothing but a plaything, but Hannibal showed him true kindness; to Hannibal he was a person, something beyond a hole for alpha knots to fill.

"I'll go back to my room," said the teen quietly as he made to stand, but Hannibal caught him by the wrist.

"You asked to sleep in my bed and I agreed, I shall not go back on my word."

So Hannibal and Will settled back down in the large bed for some much needed sleep. Omega cuddled up against alpha as if striking a pose they both knew was right.

~X~

Crystal filled with rich amber flew across the room where it smashed into the wall and left scotch to drip slowly downward. Rage coursed through Jack; he snarled and that little vein at his temple pulsated as he clenched his fists so tightly that fingernails almost broke the skin of his palms. Angry didn't even begin to describe what he felt. One of his omegas – his fucking favored omega – had escaped a place which should have been inescapable and to top things off his men had lost track of the boy somewhere in the woods.

Jack sat up in his office on the top floor of the House while he awaited the report from the betas he'd sent out to double check the camera footage, because if he couldn't locate his property then he'd damn well find out which inept idiot had let the boy out. The House tailored to the wealthy, many of which would rather nobody ever learned of their secret trips to what was essentially an omega brothel. Jack's reputation was on the line, if it got out he'd lost an omega the future of the House could have been in jeopardy and if that happened Jack's business partner would show his face.

Suddenly the intercom box, which called the corner of his desk home, crackled to life.

"*Boss, Chilton is here and he wants Will*."

Jack's brain screamed out the words 'well fuck'. Of course Chilton had decided to show up to make Jack's day even harder. He slammed his hand down on the speak button.

"I'm coming down."

The House's head did just that, he left the quiet of his office and stomped down passed the cells to the stairwell then down to the ground floor. The staff had left Chilton in the library – or at least a room they called the library, in reality it was just a comfortable room for guests to wait in until their requested omega was free; there was actually only one bookshelf in there.

As soon as Chilton laid eyes on Jack he stared at the man expectantly. Some days he wanted to slap the arrogant asshole in his smug face.

"I'm sorry, Chilton, if I'd known you were coming I would have informed you."

The doctor's eyebrow twitched upward inquisitively. "Informed me of what?"

"Unfortunately Will is very ill, we have had to place him under the care of Doctor Gideon and, as you know, it is best not to argue with Doctor Gideon."

Jack had gotten lying down to a fine art after so many years with the House. There had been a time when he'd wanted to be on the other side of the law, back when he'd been a fed. Yet, when he'd discovered just how much money there was to be made, Jack had given up on law enforcement entirely.

Jack's words were rolled around inside Chilton's head for a few moments before seemingly accepting the lie as truth.

"What a pity," he sighed. "I was looking forward to young Will and his noises."

The angry man flashed an apologetic expression. "Forgive us. I recommend Beverly or even Brian as alternatives. Brian makes good noises as well and Beverly is feisty."

Chilton made a display of thinking his options over simply to irritate Jack before he finally spoke. "Let us hope Brian's noises are worth it."

"First floor, room seventeen." Said Jack quickly. "The staff at the security gate shall escort you."

Chilton left apparently pacified without so much as a word of thanks and Jack felt his shoulders relax. When he was certain the irritating doctor was gone, Jack returned to his office and once again fell into his desk chair. Peaceful silence only hung around for a few minutes though because before he knew it the timid knocking of one of his beta staff sounded. He summoned them and Price entered with a cautious expression on his face. Jimmy Price had been ordered to go through their camera footage, which wasn't that extensive for obvious reasons, for exactly when Will had gotten out.

When Price didn't start speaking quickly enough for his liking, Jack made a waving gesture designed to hurry things along.

"Okay, so I've gone through it all like you said-"

"Just tell me who it was that let him the fuck out." Growled the alpha.

"… Beverly, she took your master-key after - after you and her y'know."

"That bitch!" Jack shot a look at Price that screamed for him to get out and Price waisted no time in doing so vanishing back to the ground floor and safety.

Feisty was the word he'd used to describe Beverly to Chilton, it was part of the reason customers liked her, but he'd never thought her to have such audacity. He patted down his pocket and sure enough his key was gone. Part of his anger turned inward toward himself but most of it stayed locked on Beverly as he stormed over to room twenty-three and practically kicked the door open to find the dark-haired woman half asleep.

In the worst awaking possible he grabbed her by the hair and slammed the poor, defenceless omega against the wall by her excuse of a bed.

"Where is my fucking key?!" Something in her eyes said she wanted to deny it but was smart enough to know she'd not be getting away with it, so, instead, they flicked to her mattress and Jack's hand shot out to grab it from the hiding place. "Why did you let him out and not yourself, huh?"

Traitorous tears welled up in Beverly's eyes from the pain of her hair slowly being plucked from her head in Jack's fierce grasp.

"Will's the youngest, too young to be here." She admitted between hated sobs. "He still had hope."

Her owner chuckled. "Well, I don't think he's got hope now he's dead. My alphas found him an hour ago. No more Will. Shame really, he was so tight, but it was a fitting punishment."

Beverly paled as bile rose up inside her throat. She'd wanted Will to have a life, to find something good beyond the walls of the House, instead all she'd done was get him killed. She may as well have killed Will with her own hands; blood was on them either way. The only real friend she'd ever had was dead and all because of her. She'd known Will since childhood and mentally assigned herself the role of his big sister. True, the only times they really got to interact was when an alpha had selected the pair of them and they'd been left in the same cell overnight or during the fitness hour, but they'd come to care for one another quickly. Beverly had admired Will's resolve; she'd wanted to free him from the House so much that when she'd spotted an opportunity she'd not paused to think about the consequences. In the end Will's death hadn't come at the hands of the House but from Beverly's own; the road to hell was paved with good intentions as they say.

The omega jolted out of her inner horror when Jack started to haul her out of room twenty-three and down the narrow hallway, a flight of stairs and into a room she quickly learned belonged to Brian. He was another of the favored omegas – of course he was, he was a male omega after all – but Beverly saw him far less frequently then she'd seen Will. Brian knelt in a much too familiar position before Chilton who'd started to unbuckle his belt; both men looked as surprised to see Jack and Beverly burst in as she herself was.

"Crawford, I don't appreciate interruptions. You've already taken Will off the menu, I hope you're not here to do the same with this one." Said Chilton with a loose gesture to the knelt omega.

Jack did his best to smile, to act suave and urbane like both alphas didn't know he wasn't either of those things.

"As an apology for the inconvenience I'd like to offer you Beverly free of charge to go with Brian here."

The doctor lifted an eyebrow as if waiting for the other shoe to drop, yet, when Jack just waited quietly, Chilton nodded.

"Thank you, very kind."

The female omega found herself tossed down beside the male one with such force she nearly knocked Brian over. They shared a look and Brian's eyes instantly swelled with silent concern.

"Take your time, Doctor Chilton."

With that Jack left the room and the two omega's to their fates.

Chapter 4

After his conversation with Will in the darkness of his bedroom, Hannibal had wasted no time getting Will the needed heat suppressants; legally or otherwise, Hannibal had enough connections for either. In the last few days the teenager had started to give off that sickly sweet whiff of an omega approaching heat so the medication hadn't shown up a moment too soon. He'd objected to giving Will more of the knock-off suppressants because only God knew how much other garbage had been mixed in; if it was the last thing Hannibal did he'd make that boy healthy again.

Late one night, pills stashed inside his inner breast pocket, the doctor strolled into his richly decorated living room where Will had been nestled on the sofa reading another of Hannibal's books. The conversation which had followed had been long and full of in-depth explanations. At first Will had been hesitant when Hannibal had tipped two out of the bottle and offered them with his palm, though remembering the years of being locked inside his room flooded back and that had him taking the drugs from Hannibal's large hand.

"They don't look like the others." He mused aloud while eyeing the round, lilac medicine.

"The suppressants you were given are a counterfeit version and substandard." He pointed to the pills Will now held. "These are actual heat suppressants, different ingredients but much safer in the grand scheme."

Will nodded then knocked them back only to grimace as the flavor lingered on his tongue. Hannibal couldn't help the half-smile which settled on his face; such a beautiful face the boy had.

"Will, they are there to do a job, not to taste good."

"… The others tasted better."

"Put a stop to your complaints and relax, watch television maybe or finish your book." Hannibal's words had been filled with a hint of jest before he turned away in favor of preparing dinner.

The late hour was no excuse for a lax meal; not when he didn't need something speedy to feed a mistreated omega at least. Quenelles de Brochet sounded right for the evening but he'd make sure to get more meat into the delicate omega soon. 'On second thoughts it's too simple and I do have that lovely heart waiting' he thought as he entered the kitchen and Quenelles de Brochet was quickly abandoned.

It took Hannibal roughly twenty minutes to prepare the beautiful heart which had once belonged to Jocelyn Shearsmith; a thirty-three year old hypochondriac with a rather vulgar swearing habit. Hannibal hadn't ever really been one for obscene language, found it uncouth and often gratuitous, but he'd truly failed to find a word as apt for Miss Shearsmith as bitch. He'd enjoyed taking her heart from her, wasn't like she'd ever really done much with it, she'd begged of course but, as with every other person he'd killed, it had fallen on deaf ears.

Once the oven door was shut and the kitchen smelt wonderful, Hannibal poured himself a glass of red wine which he'd been looking forward to all day. As he took that first pleasant sip a thought struck him and it had Hannibal return to the living room.

"Will," he asked softly. "Would you like to try some wine, nineteen is old enough to try it I suppose."

Hannibal never got an answer though because as soon as he stepped into the expansive room he found Will slumped over on the floor between the sofa and the coffee table. Many would have simply dropped their glass in the rush to help Will, but not Hannibal Lecter, no, he had too much self control for that. Instead of being haphazardly dropped the glass was gently placed atop the coffee table as he dropped to his knees by the teenager.

Will gasped for air desperately while his panicked eyes tried to fix on the alpha who'd taken him in. every sound he attempted to make left his throat gargled and distorted agonizingly. Didn't take a man with Hannibal's extensive training to figure out this was anaphylaxis; In an instant Hannibal had propped Will up against the sofa then was in his basement where he had all manner of drugs stored and grabbed one of the EpiPens he had for if one of his dinner party guests ever needed it. He rushed back to Will whose breathing seemed to have worsened and jabbed the EpiPen into Will's skinny thigh.

He sat with Will as his breathing slowly became easier, the whole time he whispered comforting words and rubbed his thumb up and down Will's shoulder softly. Once air went in and out without breaths being ragged, Hannibal lifted Will up in a princess hold, much like the first night they'd met, and carried him into the powder room where he sat Will on the floor. Hannibal lifted the toilet seat, knelt beside the omega and unceremoniously forced two fingers down Will's throat. Shock quickly gave way to violent convulsions and then Will emptied the contents of his stomach into the toilet drugs included.

Maroon eyes watched on patiently while Will calmed his breathing once more; he flushed the toilet but otherwise made no attempt to leave the floor.

"You're all right, Will, everything is okay now." He assured.

"What – what happened?" Asked the boy with tears in his eyes and saliva down his chin.

"You had an allergic reaction to the heat suppressants I gave you." Explained Hannibal calmly. "It is incredibly rare, but some omegas are allergic to the suppressants. You have only ever had the counterfeit version so we could not have known. I apologize, Will, I should have been more careful."

The dark-haired omega watched him for a moment as if trying to access if Hannibal's apology and regret was genuine or just something designed to brush over the situation. Will hadn't needed to worry though because Hannibal truly did feel guilt for his laps in judgement; though exceedingly rare he should have been prepared for such an occurrence.

When his lungs no longer screamed at him Will spoke again. "Will I still go into heat?"

Hannibal sighed at the omega's question. "Yes, I'm sorry. I can smell you, you're already in the first stages. I will not be able to acquire the counterfeit suppressants before it hits." Will's face fell and Hannibal felt that alpha instinct wanting him to protect the omega kick in again. "Will, I could always relocate for the duration of your heat. You'd be locked into the house but not your room, would that be better?"

The suit-clad man didn't like the idea of giving up his home but it was the only way he could think of to placate Will.

"… Don't want you to go." The boy whispered and, much to Hannibal's surprise, settled against the alpha's side seeking comfort; Hannibal could have purred.

"We've been through this, Will. The only way for you to not be confined and for me to remain in the house is if we were to mate."

Will lifted an eyebrow. "Mate?"

'Good God, he's really got no idea how his body works' sighed Hannibal's mind; then again, if he'd not known about heats then bonding would be alien to him as well.

"It's when an alpha and an omega join emotionally, mentally and physically. The omega becomes the alpha's and the alpha the omega's, they mate." Hannibal took a breath. "Mating is as serious to alphas and omegas as marriage is to betas, sometimes more so. The alpha bites down just here-" he pointed to Will's skun where his shoulder met his neck. "-where there is a sensitive scent gland and an alpha will then coat you in his scent so all know you are his, it's both claiming and protective. Some omegas will also bite the alpha, though some think it a sign of weakness to be so visibly claimed by an omega."

"Then mate me."

Hannibal blinked almost comically, the boy had spoken with such assuredness.

"Will, when in heat you will say *anything* to get an alpha to knot you, heats cloud your mind. Long ago alphas used to force omegas into mating with them, but I will not be doing that. I have no desire to force you into being my mate whether it be because the onset of your heat isn't letting you think clearly, simply because you do not wish for me to leave you alone or lock you in your room. You are far more than just an omega, Will, and you have every right to choose if and whom you mate with."

The teenager tilted his head backward so he could see Hannibal better. Blue eyes shone with unshed tears from vomiting but they still twinkled when he smiled so sweetly.

"Can I choose you?" That twinkle faded. "Unless – unless you don't want me."

How could he not want that boy? How could anybody not want to be Will's alpha? He was stunningly beautiful but more importantly Will was intelligent and understanding, he learned quickly and fitted in so well at Hannibal's home.

Then mate me.

The words repeated in Hannibal's head over and over, echoed off into the far recesses of his mind to freeze him in place for a few moments. An unusual omega was Will, a surprisingly demanding and assertive one at that. Will clearly sensed the alpha's sudden stillness, something which had him shuffle on the bathroom floor and look directly to Hannibal. There wasn't anger there nor disgust, just a level of uncertainty which didn't suit a man like Hannibal Lecter in the slightest. Honesty, honesty had worked well with Hannibal from the beginning so Will saw no reason to abandon that in such a serious moment. Yet, when the words started to leave his lips in an emotional tone, Will lost the courage to look at the alpha and instead let blue eyes fall to his lap.

"Hannibal, you already protect me, care about me, treat me beyond well. I- I'm not opposed to physically."

Somehow Hannibal found his voice, it was calm and stoic like Will had asked something as simple as 'what's for dinner'. He'd worked hard to never let his emotions dance freely across his handsome face or in his voice. Nobody ever knew what Hannibal was truly thinking and that was how he liked it.

"Will, just because you're 'not opposed' to it doesn't make it something you want. Heat can make you say things you wouldn't normally say."

Then something happened that neither alpha nor omega had expected: Will pushed up onto his knees and pressed a soft kiss to Hannibal's lips. The angle was somewhat awkward because of the way Hannibal was crouched, but nothing could ruin how perfect the kiss was. Hannibal had long ago decided he was fine with being a bachelor, his life was simpler that way and no omega had ever actually interested him that much. Will was different though, though young and scared of alphas, he'd slotted into Hannibal's life so easily and had a audacious streak to him not often found in omegas.

"You're the only alpha I've ever wanted to be with."

Will was beautiful. Will was intelligent. Will was special. Suddenly all of Hannibal's protests melted away as he realized one more thing: Will was *his*. Hannibal crashed his lips to Will's, pushed him down onto the tiled floor and covered his beautiful omega. Lips met in a clash of teeth and tongue the alpha quickly won until, with panted breaths, Hannibal pushed himself back onto his haunches. That sweet scent of approaching heat had started to grow stronger and Hannibal would savor every moment of it. His precious Will deserved better than the bathroom floor though, so Hannibal lifted Will into his arms bridal style and carried the teen up to his bedroom where he was placed ever so gently on Hannibal's luxurious bed. The button's of Will's shirt exploded open and bounced off along the hardwood floors when Hannibal yanked his shirt open exposing his heated skin to him. Instinctively Will buried his face in Hannibal's neck to breathe in some of that comforting alpha scent he'd never realized was a real thing until that moment. Looking back, it was probably that very moment that Will's heat fully awoke to consume him. From that second onward his body grew warmer, needier, and Hannibal was the only thing that could sate him.

With more desperate urgency than Hannibal usually liked to display, he pulled off his own clothes as though they'd personally offended him while Will shuffled out of his pants, boxers and socks. His blue eyes never left the strong man who'd soon be his alpha. The part of his mind that had only ever known alpha cruelty wanted to object, wanted Will to flee to safety and never let another alpha near him, but the innate part that craved an alpha, the part that had come to trust and care for Hannibal despite them not having known one another very long, silenced it. If he lived his life entirely ruled by fear then nothing would ever change.

The moment Hannibal was naked he moved back over Will, left a trail of wet open-mouthed kisses on his flushed skin that had the teenager moan delightfully. Hannibal pushed his thighs apart to kiss and nip at the soft skin there while Will clenched and unclenched his hands unsure of what to do with them. That moment could have gone on forever as far as Will was concerned, but the alpha soon took Will's needy length into his mouth causing him to groan wantonly. Since he'd arrived at the House, blowjobs had been an almost daily occurrence for Will. He'd thought them repulsive and disgusting, but Hannibal's mouth was amazing and talented. There wasn't anything repulsive or disgusting about it now though, just a heavenly bliss Will hadn't known existed.

"Hannibal!" The name left Will's parted lips with a strangled moan as he came and fisted the sheets.

"That's my Will. My beautiful omega." Hannibal practically purred with a grin.

He kissed back up his boy's stomach and chest until he found a nipple begging for attention. How could Hannibal resist such a thing? He kissed, nipped and sucked at the boy's nipple as he delighted in Will's growing desperation. Slick was already gushing from his body so Hannibal knew it wouldn't be too much longer before heat took over Will's mind entirely. He felt his own rut hurtling, felt it screaming at him to hurry up and knot the boy already, but Hannibal would tease Will a little while longer. He'd eaten many a human in his lifetime, but none had tasted as delectable as Will's pheromones filled sweat on his tongue.

Only when Will's pleas and whimpers became too much for him to resist did Hannibal finally find the omega's neck. One bite and Will was his forever.

"Are you sure? This is your last chance to refuse." Pheromones and slick might have hindered his ability to think, but Hannibal was no weak alpha who'd just lose himself, he had standards.

"Alpha." Will whined and that was all the permission Hannibal needed.

Teeth plunged into Will's neck where his shoulder met his neck, a deep and painful bite which added irony blood to the sinfully perfect air. Will was his! Will was wonderfully his. An omega of his very own to love and adore.

Wet and desperate for his alpha to take care of him was Will, a new painful pleasure coursed through his veins from the mating bite to the tips of his toes and, more specifically, his needy entrance. Will pushed his hips up to meet Hannibal's erection causing them both to moan.

"Heat is making you desperate, my beautiful boy." Will nodded swiftly and pulled his head up off the pillow to kiss his alpha.

"Please Hannibal." Hannibal kissed him as fingers trailed down his skin to his core, teasing. "Alpha!"

Will's begs grew a little louder making Hannibal chuckle, then a finger slipped inside him, then another all aided by the copious amount of slick Will's heat had produced. Moans escaped the omega as he pushed himself down on Hannibal's crooked fingers. The alpha wasn't close enough though so Will wrapped his legs round Hannibal; fingernails dug into the man's back bringing Hannibal as close as possible.

"*Please*."

Hannibal couldn't deny him any longer, not when he begged so wonderfully, so pulled his fingers back and Will mourned the loss, but he didn't have to suffer long, Hannibal made sure of that. He lined himself up then thrust in to the very hilt with a kiss. He gave Will a few moments to adjust to the size of him then pulled almost all the way out only to slam back in causing Will to bounce on the bed. Hannibal set a painfully fast pace that had Will moaning and gasping into Hannibal's neck. 'Breed the omega. Mine. My omega. *Mine!*' were the words which circled in Hannibal's mind as he claimed his beautiful boy. Nineteen, abused, these were things which Hannibal should have paid far more attention to. He could have taken Will to a shelter for omegas or done any number of other things to help him, but no, Hannibal had wanted him from the second he'd brought Will home. Had wanted to claim the perfect boy for his own. Well, Hannibal hadn't ever claimed to be a good man, he was a murderer and cannibal after all.

Just as Will was getting use to the speed his new alpha gripped his ass and flipped them so Will straddled his hips, pulling the omega down onto himself. Hannibal felt his knot building and making it a little difficult to pull out of Will, a few more thrusts and Will came with a shout, splashed sterile seed over Hannibal's stomach and practically collapsed atop him. None of the other alphas had made him feel that before, there hadn't ever been anything but pain with them. Will's walls tightened around Hannibal and pushed him over the edge, filling the young omega with his seed, knot keeping it in its rightful place.

Will lay collapsed on Hannibal's chest, lungs pulling in sex-scented air while a trickle of blood continued to run down his neck and shoulder. Hannibal knew that Will would be uncomfortable staying in that position until his knot went down, but Hannibal rather liked the idea of just laying there with his beautiful omega on top of him. Many alphas would have insisted on their omega remaining under them, being kept in a submissive and owned position even after sex, but Hannibal wasn't most alphas and rather liked the feeling of Will snuggled into him regardless of sticky seed between them.

"What now?" Will asked after getting his breath back.

"Now you're mine."

~X~

Jack suddenly burst into the dilapidated foyer startling Price, who sat at the main desk, and Gideon who'd been leaning against it. Jack only ever showed himself there for one of three things; a new omega delivery, a VIP client, or a problem. Since Price would have known about a delivery or an important visitor, only the third option remained. However, the suit-clad man was smiling which was rather unnerving, he never smiled. The two betas share a look to one another as though to confirm the other was confused but smartly remained silent. The door buzzed then and, after a glare from Jack, Price hurried to open the door. Mason Verger entered with an unconscious brunette over his shoulder in a fireman hold. Whoever she was she'd clearly been through quite the beating. Verger presented himself as a powerful alpha with illegal dealings all over the country, but in reality was just an alpha wanna-be irked each and every day by the fact he'd only be a beta. Poking at his alpha complex was one of Jack's favorite hobbies. However, the man was damn good at getting hold of young, pretty omegas without many questions. A procurer of sorts was probably the best description for Verger.

The unconscious woman was dumped onto the ground and Price rushed to her. She was alive and the damage seemed mostly limited to bruising, It was when he pushed her hair out of her face though that Price gasped.

"This is Alana Bloom."

The alpha and cruel beta chuckled.

"When I hired you three months ago you mentioned you had experience with omegas because you'd helped some kindly little omega out with the charity work she did for all the unfortunate omegas out there. The Omega Lives fund or something" Jack smirked. "You made her sound pretty

and fun to break so I sent Verger to get her. I'm down an omega so this one can rebuild the numbers." He turned back to Verger. "Take her to Will's old room."

"Twenty-two right?" After a nod of confirmation, Verger made his way up the stairs and Jack turned fully to face Price who still crouched on the floor. He growled ensuring the submissive beta knew his place. "You have no choice in this. I can't have empty rooms and you knew where there was an omega easily plucked."

Without another word Jack pushed Price back towards the desk then returned to his office. Alana had always been a kind woman who'd never let her status as an omega stop her, frankly Price had always thought she acted more like a beta. A good woman who'd just wanted to help less fortunate omegas where she could, that was Alana. He'd tried to help as well, but then his father had died and left Price with all his debts to some very evil people. He'd never wanted to work for the House or Jack Crawford, but he'd not really had a choice. Now he'd dragged innocent Alana into this. He'd never suspected Jack would force her into all this, she was older than most of the omegas and more knowledgable about the world – was Jack really that desperate to get product numbers up?

Gideon couldn't have cared less, he was just there to treat any medical issues that popped up, not to befriend anybody. Without Gideon the House probably would have had a significantly higher turnover rate. Still, while a monster in his own right, Gideon was a somewhat reasonable beta.

"Don't do anything stupid, Jimmy. Crawford's the alpha and we're the betas. You choose to fight him and all you'll do is get yourself killed.

"I know," Price sighed. He almost spouted the idea of getting her out like Beverly had with Will, but managed to hold his tongue; Gideon would have just gone to Jack. "I know."

Besides if someone else escaped so soon and it was Alana, Jack would know it had to have been Price and would ensure his death was slow and torturous at the hands of Verger. Then Alana would have just been tossed back into that hellhole called a room. He took a deep breath to calm himself and ran a hand through his silver hair. Beverly and Brian were smart enough to protect themselves most of the time. Then there was Abigail, she was the youngest of them all but disturbingly intelligent and had much the same mindset as Will when one stopped to think about it. Price hated to admit it, but they were the most important people at the House to him, they were the ones he truly cared about; but Price didn't know how to help them or himself. Poor Beverly still hadn't recovered from the beating Jack had given her after Chilton had left; Gideon had taken hours sewing up all the cuts.

That was what Jack did. he collected his omegas and surrounded himself with betas so when something vicious happened they could do nothing about it. He had built a pyramid and put himself at the top, made himself king of the place. No one could go against him, not even for their own family.

Chapter 5

Alana's painful eyes opened slowly, blinking sleep from them and adjusting to the dull light. Her muscles hurt, her face hurt, and then she realized she wasn't in her own bed. There had been a man, he'd broken into her home and – it was all blurry after that. Carefully she pushed herself up on weak arms to find the room small and furnished with nothing but the so-called bed she lay on. 'Where am I?' she questioned herself as pain ran through her head, it thumped and pulsed. Her blue nightdress was ripped and torn at the shoulders. Had she been kidnapped?

The door clicked open then and two people slipped inside swiftly only to close the door behind them quietly; clearly they'd not wanted to be seen.

"Who are you? Where am I?"

The man made a calming gestured and urged Alana to be quiet. Omega's these people were omegas, the girl couldn't have been more than thirteen.

"It's okay, you're okay, but you need to be quiet. They can't know we're in here. I'm Brian, this is Abigail." The younger girl gave a little wave with tensed shoulders that likely hadn't relaxed in a number of years. Poor Abigail had presented early and been held by the House since the tender age of nine. "We won't hurt you."

"What is this place? Where am I?"

Brian sighed. "It's called the House. I guess it's like an illegal omega brothel. We're playthings for the alphas who come through. Don't fight them and take the pills Gideon gives you. Do that and they won't hurt you too much."

Alana's eyes widened as panic set in. She couldn't stay in a place like that, she might have been an omega but she was a person with rights. She rushed to the door intent on yanking it open and fleeing but Abigail caught her by the arm and pulled her back.

"Jack will be doing his rounds soon. If you're gone he'll find you and hurt all of us as punishment. He has a load of betas working for him, some alphas too. There are cameras in the stairwells."

Together Abigail and Brian managed to steer Alana back to sit on what had once been Will's bed.

"If we're all prisoners, how did you get in here?"

A very valid question. "This is Jimmy's floor. He's one of the good ones and wanted you to know what was happening." Brian pulled the door open just a crack so Abigail could peer down either end of the hall. "Alana, when Jack comes in here, be quiet and don't fight him. It'll be better for you if you make him think you're submissive."

With that Brian left leaving her alone in the room as tears built in her eyes. She'd heard of places like the House in her work but never in a million years thought she'd end up in one. There would always be brothels and especially ones that catered to alphas, but laws and officials kept them clean, safe and regulated. The House, that was just a place of evil and sadism.

She was angry! Alana had been stolen from her own home and not been able to put up a fight, hadn't even been able to scream loud enough to alert the neighbors. The brunette sat there for a few minutes lost in her own thoughts, halfway between anger and terror. In a single moment her life had changed forever and without her permission.

The sound of the door opening pulled her back from dark thoughts. In the doorway stood the House's vicious overlord. Brian and Abigail had warned her, had told her to just act timid and everything would go more easily, but a sudden bust of courage surged inside her and had Alana dodge around Jack and out into the hall before she'd even known she'd moved. Cameras didn't matter, guards didn't matter either as long as she outran them. Yet, before she'd even fully made it beyond the door a tight grasp on her hair stopped Alana and dragged her back into the room kicking and screaming. She hit the bed with such force the frame creaked and vibrated through her very soul.

"I think there are some things you need to learn!" Jack hissed.

Meanwhile, Price sat downstairs at the reception desk pretending he couldn't hear Alana's screams. Turned out he wasn't a very good actor because he trembled and shook. If he'd never mentioned Alana she wouldn't have been dragged to this horrid place. He might have been a guard with keys, but he was just as much of a prisoner, there wasn't anything he could do to help her without dying himself. Weak, Price was weak and he hated it.

~X~

Hannibal watched Will as he continued to slumber, his beautiful face illuminated by warming streaks of orange sun. He leaned on his elbow to card long fingers through Will's dark curls as a soft smile played on his lips. Stunning, the omega was stunning. Finally Hannibal's gaze roused Will from his sleep, limbs stretched almost obscenely as eyes finally fluttered open.

"Morning." Will mumbled, voice groggy, before he snuggled into Hannibal's strong chest to seek out comfort and his alpha's scent.

In the night Hannibal had taken the liberty of coating Will in his scent, marking the boy as his to everybody. He'd never urged to do such a thing before, but Will was that special one who Hannibal yearned to call his.

"As much as I like watching you sleep." He paused to kiss Will's supple lips. "You will be in need again in a few hours and I have an appointment to get to. I will go to that and then come back and take care of you."

"Maybe I need you now." Will spoke as he snaked his arms around the alpha.

Hannibal laughed and kissed his omega again.

"Don't be so demanding." Hannibal teased then climbed out of bed to select one of his perfectly tailored suits, it didn't take long for him to select a silver-grey one with a coal tie. "It would be much too rude for me to cancel an appointment at such short notice. I promise to return as soon as

it ends." As he pulled on his pants he continued. "I will make you breakfast, Will, but you will have to get out of bed to eat it."

"I want to stay in bed, its warm."

"Then you will go hungry."

Will pouted. "You're mean to me."

Hannibal pulled on his shirt buttoning it up slowly. "I'm your alpha, I can do as I please."

Will knelt on the bed bare before a now fully dressed Hannibal and spoke with an alluring smile on his face.

"Come and show me then." Hannibal laughed again and kissed Will's soft neck to tease the mating bite there a little.

Amazing how mating had put Will at such ease around a thoroughbred alpha. Hannibal liked Will better this way, free and unafraid.

"My sweet William, as much as I would like to torment you until you become needy, missing an appointment would be unforgivably rude and we can't have that." Will grumbled, no omega was happy to have their alpha too far away when in heat, Hannibal would schedule things properly for the next one though. "I will however bring you breakfast in bed."

~X~

Hannibal had been in his usual chair listening to Raymond Montgomery go on and on about how he hated his life and blamed his parents for almost the entire appointment. Raymond had no traumas to move passed, he was simply a man who couldn't take responsibility for anything in his life and insisted everything was somebody else's fault. His parents, siblings, teachers, his ex-wife, everybody but him was at fault. There wouldn't be any helping Raymond because he didn't want to be helped, just wanted someone with a degree to agree he was perfect in every way. frankly, Hannibal had started to think about eating him. When the clock on his desk chimed signalling the end of the appointment, Hannibal felt as though it were a song sent by angels themselves. All he wanted was to return home to his wonderful boy and explore that soft omegan skin of his. Polietly he ushered Raymond from his office only to find someone he'd rather not have seen in his waiting area. He'd really need to get a new secretary sooner rather than later. Doctor Frederick Chilton stood there with his usual smug expression and Hannibal had to mentally tell himself not to bash the other doctor's head in with a paperweight; such a thing would have only sullied his office and lengthened his and Will's time apart.

Without so much as a greeting Chilton entered Hannibal's office and glanced around somewhat jealous of how much nicer Hannibal's was compared to his own.

"Good morning, Frederick." Hannibal greeted in the nicest possible tone, mainly to annoy the other doctor.

"Noah Himman. He wants you to be his therapist, refuses to talk to anyone else. Says you understand him."

"Yes, I treated him for a few months before his capture." Hannibal closed his appointment book and leaned on his desk. Seemed Chilton wished to get right to the reason he was there. "I assume he refuses to speak with you?" Chilton gave an annoyed smile.

"He does."

"And you have come to me out of desperation." It wasn't a question.

"Will you speak to him or not, Hannibal?"

"Of course. Only too happy to help out a friend."

Now that pissed off Chilton, who held his hands behind his back. Didn't matter how prestigious Chilton's position was, he'd never be able to hold a candle to Hannibal's skill or reputation.

The dark-haired man leaned forward to sniff the air in Hannibal's direction then cocked his head to one side curiously. "You smell like omega, Hannibal. Didn't think that was your speed. When did you start going down there?"

For the first time since they'd met, Chilton confused Hannibal but he kept it off his face. Nonchalance, that was all his expression showed.

"Where's there?"

"I don't know why I tell you anything Hannibal, you never listen to me." Chilton sighed at Hannibal's stoic mien. "The House."

Chilton was abruptly cut off by Hannibal's phone ringing, it echoed through the otherwise silent office halting anything the dark-haired doctor wanted to say. Hannibal wanted to launch across the room at Chilton but chose to answer the phone instead while thinking: '*saved by the bell'*. Hannibal only half listened to the female voice on the other end of the line. Chilton waved and left leaving Hannibal alone with a woman yapping in his ear saying she needed to cancel her appointment without his normal twenty-four hour notice. Hannibal should have found that rude but his mind was focused on something else entirely.

"All right, Miss Winters. Just this once though." He hung up before she could say anything else. Hannibal had a way to find the House and he was going to make sure that Chilton told him everything he knew – Oh! And he would make certain Chilton suffer through every sentence. Not for him but for Will. *His* perfect Will.

~X~

The rest of Will's heat had been spent in bed with his alpha taking care of him and only vanishing long enough to fetch food and water. Though he'd never known the word for it thanks to his lacklustre father and how quickly he'd been tossed into the House and forced to take suppressants, Will did remember heat, he'd experienced it that first time when everything had changed and he'd

learned he was an omega. It had hurt back then, had made him feel like clawing out of his skin from the inside. Yet, with Hannibal there, the pain never came for him, only the pleasure. Hannibal wasn't like any other alpha he'd met and not just because he was the only one who'd not raped or abused him, Hannibal was something totally unique who clearly used those bespoke suits and calming words to hide something darker within himself; that should have frightened Will, but instead it just made him feel safe.

With Will's heat, Chilton and the House had been pushed to the back of Hannibal's mind to deal with later, he'd not been able to be angry or plot a murder while with his beautiful boy. After his heat, Will had gone right back to lazing around Hannibal's ornate home reading whatever he found in the library – Hannibal made a mental note to take Will to an optometrist to check his eyesight – but it that had come with its own problems. Sure, Hannibal adored the idea of keeping Will all to himself in the house where nobody could ever pose a threat to him again, but that wasn't fair on Will. The teenager had spent so long locked up and Hannibal didn't want his home to become little more than a better decorated cage. That was how he'd come up with the idea of taking Will out to dinner. There wouldn't be too much socializing to be done and Will would have his food as something to distract from the people around him. Hannibal did like the idea of keeping will all to himself in his house, but he liked the idea of showing his omega off and having him on his arm at events even more.

At first Will had refused uncomfortably, then he'd teased Hannibal that this was all because he couldn't be bothered to cook, but, eventually, Will had agreed and Hannibal had gifted him with a delightful suit of blue and black; colors and patterns a little more subdued than Hannibal himself would have chosen, but that looked exquisite on Will's frame.

As expected, dinner hadn't quite gone off without a hitch and it had taken a good twenty minutes to get Will conversing with him properly. Will had thought people looking at him was because he didn't belong in such a place, that even in his new suit he gave away he was little more than cheep trash. Hannibal hadn't tolerated that outlook; the real reason people looked was because Will was by far the most beautiful omega they'd ever had the good fortune to see and were jealous that he belonged to Hannibal. While he'd not fully believed his mate, Will had smiled and begun to talk more.

When dinner ended, Hannibal had paid the bill and ushered Will back into the car so they could go home and snuggle up in bed. The Bentley rolled along the dark road, trees hunched over the top almost cocooning the street in darkness had it not been for the headlights.

"Thank you for dinner." Will's voice filled the silence. "I didn't know swordfish would be so good."

Hannibal chuckled. "Its my plan to widen your palate."

The two fell back into a peaceful silence for a few moments before Will broke it again, eyes downcast to his hands as he picked at his nails for something to do.

"I keep thinking this is a dream. That I am going to wake up back in that room and have all of this gone – you gone."

Alpha didn't speak he simply pulled the car over and turned to Will with those maroon eyes of his filled with love.

"Will, this is real. You are my mate now, we are mated and I will never let anyone or anything harm you ever again. If they so much as try then I will kill them. You have an alpha now." Will smiled

and Hannibal leaned just enough to press his lips to the omega's. "And your scent has changed."

Will opened his mouth to question but closed it again having thought better of it. Hannibal saw it though, he never wanted his sweet boy to feel he had to stay quiet.

"What is it, brangusis?"

Will swallowed. "… How many people have you killed? I can see it in you, you've killed people."

The atmosphere changed but not to something violent as Will had somewhat expected, instead Hannibal seemed strangely calm.

"I will never hurt you, my Will. I promise you there is nothing you have to fear from me."

It was then that the brave and unwavering side of Will came more to the foreground, he let his hands fall still and turned to look at his mate properly.

"I know that. If you were going to hurt me then you'd have done it by now. I know you kill people though. That's why you keep me out of the basement and why your hands sometimes smell of blood. I don't know what your reason is but I know you have one, you're not mindless. I've met evil alphas – animalistic alphas who just want to hurt and kill like animals, you're not one of them. I've accepted that you kill, I accepted it before my heat. It doesn't bother me even though it probably should. I love you."

Hannibal's heart twinged, Will had figured him out where police and profilers had failed for decades, yet still he loved the doctor. That meant more than Hannibal could say. Acceptance wasn't something a man like Hannibal Lecter often got from those who knew the real him; it warmed his heart.

"It's good you belong to an alpha who's actions you accept. I hadn't meant to hide my true nature from you exactly, but didn't wish for you to mistakenly believe me to be like those you'd escaped."

"I told you: you're nothing like them. The people you kill, you eat them, don't you? You're a cannibal."

Hannibal drug his tongue across his teeth then took a breath. "Yes."

"Then I guess I'm one as well, right?" Hannibal nodded. "That ham in the omelettes the very first night, it wasn't ham?"

"No, it was a rather rude and egotistical man who liked to take upskirt pictures of women."

Will chuckled. "Probably best he's not around anymore."

Unsure of what else to say, Hannibal simply got the car moving again towards home. Just the word cannibal repulsed so many people, but Will had hardly batted an eye. His smart omega had quietly figured him out almost from the very beginning yet stayed with him regardless. Will Graham truly was the most perfect omega to have ever lived; only nineteen but wise beyond his years and capable of separating Hannibal's controlled fine art from the barbaric bloodshed law enforcement saw ever day.

After a few moments of silence, Will breathed out a laugh that had his alpha lift an eyebrow. "Belong to you, do I? Property of Doctor Hannibal Lecter, I rather like the sound of that."

Quite how Will had come to accept him murders and all, Hannibal wouldn't ever fully know, but having the teen's love was more than enough. He'd given up on having a mate many years go. In his teen years he'd played with the idea but never found that one omega he'd wanted to be with and protect. Then, as he'd gotten older and his killing had evolved, Hannibal had decided an omega couldn't be brought into his world. Of course the man wasn't a monk, he'd dated betas and enjoyed himself, but love had been firmly off limits to him. Will was different though, Will was special and saw the most hidden parts of Hannibal, yet loved him anyway.

Much to the couple's pleasure they fell back into a peaceful silence, Will watched trees zip passed them while the two listened to the silence as though it were a symphony written just for them; perhaps Hannibal would compose something for his darling omega. They turned left, right then another left before Will screamed out for Hannibal to stop the Bentley on the desolate road. Before Hannibal had even come to a full standstill, Will was out the car and off toward a ditch on the side of the road. The road might have been a quiet one, but it was also poorly lit and could have led to Will's death in any number of ways.

Leaving the Bentley's doors open, Hannibal rushed after Will to find his mate crouched over a reddish-brown pile of fur he soon realized was a dog. Skinny and with a cut to its withers, but conscious and trying to move around.

"Please get back in the car, Will, it is rather cold out here."

"No." Hannibal lifted an eyebrow at his omega's sudden refusal. "The poor boy's hurt. Please, Hannibal, he's filthy and hungry. You said it was cold and you're a doctor, you could treat this cut."

Hannibal hadn't ever really been one for animals, they shed everywhere and scratched furniture, but Will was genuinely concerned and did his best to sooth the injured dog.

"I'm a psychiatrist and former surgeon, Will, not a veterinarian." In reality, tending to the dog's wound would be child's play for him.

"Please? He's a stray." Will looked up at him with pleading blue eyes Hannibal struggled to resist. "He needs a home and someone to help him. Please, alpha?"

He longed to say no, could just refuse and shove Will back in the car, but Will knew exactly what he'd done with he'd said alpha in such a pleading tone; Will had practically weaponized the word. To make matters worse, Will had already begun petting the animal and promising that it would 'all be all right' and that he'd 'come home where it's warm'.

Hannibal sighed, where once there had been an intimidating thoroughbred alpha who always found a method of getting his own way, was now a pushover who couldn't deny his beautiful mate.

"All right," he lifted a finger and pointed it sternly at the dog. "But he stays *off* my furniture."

Will beamed and suddenly everything was all worth it. The happy noise that escaped him warmed Hannibal's heart and let the filthy animal hop into his Bentley.

~X~

When they arrived home, Hannibal watched as an almost giddy Will led the dog upstairs and into the bathroom while he'd fetched his medical kit. Thankfully the wound hadn't been deep and easily tended to. Soon the alpha had gone to fetch some older towels while Will saw to bathing the dog and getting him warm. The animal was surprisingly docile seemed content with Will's touch, that was the moment Hannibal realized there wouldn't be any getting the dog out of his house, this thing lived with them now. He placed the towels as Will diluted some shampoo and got to work, the dog hadn't liked the shower spray though and Hannibal soon found himself with his sleeves rolled up to his elbows as he knelt on the floor beside his omega to hold the dog in place. Will cleared grime and god only knew what else from his fur; Hannibal doubted his shower would ever be the same again no matter how much he cleaned it. The things he apparently did for his omega.

When the animal finally shook himself, Will burst out laughing causing Hannibal to stare at him questioningly. Still giggling, Will rid Hannibal's head of the little pile of bubbles settled there. Once they'd dried the dog off, Will shuffled close to his alpha and kissed him deeply.

"Thank you for this, Hannibal. I love you."

Alpha pulled omega close. "You're very welcome, mylimasis."

After his cleaning the dog looked much more like their new pet rather than the filthy stray he'd been before. Hannibal still would have rather the dog went somewhere else, but Will seemed to be in love with the animal and Hannibal couldn't take that from Will. Besides, he'd been the one who wanted Will to be more social rather than be alone in the house all the time. At the very least they could take the dog for walks and hopefully make Will feel safer around other people. Yes, if that mutt would be staying with them, then Hannibal would put him to work.

"Hannibal, is there something we can feed him?"

"There is some left over steak in the fridge, he can eat that." Will wandered off followed by the animal in search of a steak they both knew wasn't beef.

Alone, Hannibal cleaned up and changed into his night clothes while lamenting the inevitable loss of his pristine home. When he finally made it downstairs the dog was curled up on the living room floor apparently warm, happy and therefore tired. Will pulled him down onto the couch so he could snuggle into his alpha's strong chest; something Hannibal delighted in.

"Thank you for letting me keep him."

"You are very welcome, Will."

That earned him a kiss before Will shifted to straddled the older man's hips and snaked his arms around his neck.

"I really am grateful."

Will pressed his lips to his mate's. Hannibal almost growled and dug his teeth back into Will's neck calling back the pleasure of his mating bite.

"Will, shut the dog in the mud room and join me upstairs would you?"

Most people's mud rooms were storage places and somewhere to take off shoes, but Hannibal's was just as much of a showstopper as the rest of his house and likely larger than most college dorm

rooms.

Will kissed him again and stood. "Winston."

"Excuse me?"

"His name is Winston." With that Will disappeared went to usher the dog into the mud room for the night.

Yes, Hannibal's house wouldn't ever be the same again.

Chapter 6

The House's main door buzzer had Gideon glance down to the camera from his book with the most disinterested expression he could muster. He shouldn't have been manning that damn desk, he was the place's so-called doctor not some lackey, yet there he was at the desk. Jack hadn't taken kindly to Will's escape and had ordered the deaths of all the exterior guards from that night, as one could imagine, that had left them rather short-handed until more lowlifes could be brought on. Gideon glanced to his watch, Chilton was a little late for him, normally so punctual. He buzzed the tall doctor in just as Price descended the stairs and passed through the security gate; what a god send, meant Gideon could return to his book.

"Good afternoon, Doctor Chilton." Price greeted as politely as he was able; it wasn't ever a good idea to get on an alpha's bad side. "Unfortunately Will is still unavailable, I know he's your favorite."

Price knew why Jack had insisted they lie to anybody who wanted Will, they couldn't admit a lowly omega had escaped them, not when it would have done nothing but suggest the House incompetent. If that happened Jack and his mysterious business partner would lose business and they'd never risk their bottom-line. No, everybody would just go along with Jack's wishes and pretend Will was ill and then in a few weeks they'd announce his death as a saddening but unavoidable tragedy.

Chilton shrugged. "That's quite all right, I am here to see Beverly. I feel like a change and want to have some fun before I get on the plane."

"Oh?" Price tried to sound conversational. "You're going on a trip, Doctor?"

"It's nothing all that exciting, just overseeing the movement of a patient in Chicago."

Price might have tried to play nice with all the alpha scum that wandered into the House, but Gideon couldn't have cared less and would rather have read in quiet peace.

"Doctor Chilton, Beverly isn't in the boss' good book at the moment." He smirked. "She's a little bruised."

"I don't really care."

With that Price guided Chilton up the stairs of peeling green paint to Beverly's room on the second floor. Security gates were unlocked then locked again and other guards seemed to do their rounds on autopilot.

"When should we expect you back, Doctor?"

Though not an extensive list, they did have a list of regulars who'd been indulging their darkness at the House for years, and Chilton was almost at the top of that list. Jack liked to keep track of when his regulars came and went so they could make sure the favorites were always available.

"Not for a while, the patient is problematic and paperwork alone will take a week. I would send someone else but, frankly, everyone I could send it a total moron."

Price didn't know how to respond to that so didn't, instead he carried on along the halls toward room twenty-three which he unlocked with a click. The door swung open to reveal yet another tragic room containing only a bed, small window lined with bars and depressed omega.

"When you're done, just hit the buzzer and I'll come turn off the maglocks"

Chilton simply shoved Price aside with a huff, he'd been visiting the House for years now, he knew about the maglocks and the protocols without some beta's help. 'What even is the point of a beta anyway?' his mind questioned as he kicked the door shut behind him.

Price simply stood outside the door for a moment. Hated himself for assisting in yet more rape and abuse just to save his own life. A hypocrite, that was all he was. Didn't matter how nice he was to the omegas there, he was still their jailer. With a sigh he flipped the green sign over to red indicating the room was occupied then glanced to room twenty-two. What had once been Will's room was now Alana's cage and it was all his fault. Will's escape had been reckless and sheer dumb luck, they'd not be so lucky again.

Quietly he unlocked the door and stepped inside to see Brian and Abigail gathered with Alana on the bed. He did this every now and again when they had a quiet day, would help a few of them into one another's rooms so they could at least have some proper social interaction. If he was ever caught, Price knew Jack would cave his head in, but it was the only rebellion he was brave enough to take.

"It's time to go back to your rooms. Chilton's here and I almost thought he'd ask for you, Brian." Had that happened, the game would have been up. Price wouldn't have been able to lie his way out of it or explain why Brian hadn't been in his room. "Jack will be doing his rounds soon as well."

Brian sighed and stood. "We know, we heard you talking to him outside. He's with Beverly, right?" Price nodded. "It's okay, she's strong."

His fists clenched, how he hated Jack Crawford with every fibre of his being. The man was a monster dressed up in a suit. Then there was him, he'd done nothing but help that monster. Alana couldn't even look at him. When she'd realized he was the connection, he was how she'd ended up on the House's radar, she'd looked away. She'd not said a word to him, somehow he felt her screaming at him would have been better, at least that would have been a reaction. Brian grabbed Price by the arm then and pulled him into a tight hug, a soft embrace that soothed his soul.

"Everything will work out, Jimmy." The male omega assured, he wasn't exactly an optimist but it was all any of the omegas had at the House. "Love you."

The moment Brian's lips met his, Price felt as though all would be okay, that the world was still beautiful. He wrapped his arms around the omega and hugged him tight; Abigail just watched them with a smile.

"I don't think I could cope if I didn't have you."

Suddenly a door banged distantly and the two men jumped apart. They all knew that sound, for that was the sound of Jack's office door. They needed to all get back to their rooms before Jack's rounds discovered them missing.

~X~

Hannibal stood in his office with his phone to his ear, though he felt more like he'd been bashing his head into a wall. What should have been a simple call to Chilton's office had turned into a game of ineptitude.

"What do you mean he's in Chicago? He asked me to call him." He felt like shouting, but it wasn't Chilton's secretary's fault the man was an asshole so shouting would have been plain rude. "When will he be back?" Hannibal paused for a moment to await an answer while pondering of Chilton was capable of thinking anything through logically. "Forgive me, I never asked your name. Katie. A lovely name. Katie, please contact me as soon as he returns to the office. Thank you."

Hannibal set the phone down and practically fell into his desk chair with his eyes fixed on the floor. Chilton had contacted him the previous day about consulting on some difficult patient he'd encountered then sauntered off to Chicago without a moment of consideration. The rude, the lowest of the low. The alpha may have looked calm but inside his blood boiled. Chilton knew something about the House and Hannibal had planned on using this so-called consulting to drill him for more information. Now he had to wait for him to return and find another opening, that could have taken weeks. Will's heat might have passed but Hannibal could still feel traces of it inside him, traces of lust and love which kept his alpha DNA alive and urging to cut Chilton into numerous pieces until he told Hannibal what he wanted to know.

Suddenly his cellphone began to ring which jolted Hannibal out of his thoughts and back to the world around him. He smiled upon seeing his sweet omega's name on the screen and answered with a loving hello."

"Everything all right, brangusis?" He enquired in that wonderfully accented voice of his.

"Hannibal," began his boy in a sullen tone which instantly had Hannibal grow concerned. "I think I'm ill. Would you come home, please?"

"I'll be right there, Will."

Ill? Will had been fine that morning and, though the weather was still cold and frightful, Will had been snuggled up warm and safe in Hannibal's home for more than a month now.

~X~

The moment the front door closed behind him, Hannibal made quick work of shedding his woolen coat and hurried up the stairs to the bedroom he shared with his beloved omega. It didn't matter in the slightest how short of a time they'd known one another, not with the connection they felt and how much they'd come to love one another. Will had seen Hannibal's darkness and loved him anyway.

He found Will sat on their bed with Winston on the floor beside him. Will didn't look flushed or feverish but Hannibal checked regardless.

"How are you feeling, Will?"

"Not sure. I threw up a while ago but now I feel fine. It's weird, not ill exactly but odd." Will bit his lip. "Can I have a hug?"

Will wasn't an overly affectionate person, but Hannibal wouldn't deny him. He perched on the bed and let the sweet omega fill his arms while coating him in his alpha scent. Scent, that was different.

"What's wrong?" Will asked, still snuggled into the hug.

"Your scent has changed." Will pulled back and smelt his own wrists as though he'd somehow pick up on it.

"What? Do I not smell like you?"

"Its not that. I can smell you, me, even Winston. It's the underneath that has changed, there's something more there than usual." Hannibal returned his nose to that delightful patch of skin just behind his omega's ear. "Will, you're pregnant."

"*What*!?" Will looked at him in disbelief.

"You're pregnant." Hannibal repeated. "It'll be a while until we can know for sure, but I have an excellent sense of smell and am certain."

"Pregnant." Will said to himself as his eyes fell to his flat stomach. Had he been at the House the very idea would have terrified him. This wasn't the result of some random alpha though, this was Hannibal's pup. Their pup. Their family. "… I rather like the idea of that."

"Its reality not an idea." Hannibal corrected. "A lovely reality."

The older man toed off his shoes and climbed onto the bed behind Will to bring him back to lean against his chest. They sat in silence for what seemed like hours with Hannibal's hand resting on Will's belly.

Will whispered: "You really have changed my life."

"I think that's my line, mylimasis."

Winston jumped up on the bed then to settle with Will, and Hannibal couldn't bring himself to refuse him.

Chapter 7

Chilton had been away in Chicago for almost a month and Hannibal had started to grow impatient, others would have termed it 'pissed off' but Hannibal was a gentlemen so they'd stick to impatient. He'd even debated travelling to Chicago himself but knew that wasn't the wisest course of action, doing that could result in things leading back to him and Hannibal wouldn't ever risk his pregnant omega. So, for the time being, Chilton got to go on with his life totally unaware mentioning the House had signed his own death warrant.

Meanwhile, Will had accepted his pregnancy far more swiftly than Hannibal had expected, then again Will never ceased to surprise him. Will might have only been nineteen, but he was surprisingly mature for his age and knew his life was exponentially better now he'd found a mate in Hannibal. Will had even begun thinking of baby names already to pass the time.

While there were several guest rooms in the house, only one was both close by and had a wonderful view of the back yard, therefore it had become the room designated as the future nursery. That was where Hannibal found his mate one afternoon, sat cross-legged in the very centre with a notebook and color chart. Decorating hadn't ever interested Will before – not that he'd really had much choice – and had it just been for him then Will would have continued not to care, but for the life inside him he wanted all to be perfect. Will hadn't had two loving fathers to protect and love him, but his pup would and decorating a nursery was just the first expression of that love.

"Here." Hannibal handed his mate a glass of freshly squeezed orange juice as he crouched beside him.

A little over a month pregnant and had already thrown himself into being the perfect omegan parent. He'd make sure their pup got everything Will never had; didn't matter if their child was alpha, omega or even beta, it would be loved completely. Will had already decided the traditional pink for a girl and blue for a boy was unacceptable, too simple and boring; he wasn't a fan of the red Hannibal had painted it either. Something original and neutral, that was why Hannibal had sourced him a color chart.

"Think I've made a decision."

"That didn't take you long, my darling boy."

While Hannibal had expected green to be the final answer, he'd not expected Persian green, had thought Will would choose something a little softer. Still, it was a nice color and Will wouldn't be denied. What really hadn't surprised him was Will's intention of putting up artwork of various animals, as if Will would have chosen art of anything else.

"I thought the crib could go over by the window." He gestured still holding his glass of juice. "I want a proper bookshelf in here as well. What do you think to a rocking chair next to it?"

"Yes, lovely." Hannibal agreed. "You've really put a lot of thought into this." Will was wrapped up in the older man's arms then; a loving embrace. "You can have anything you want, Will. Just tell me and I'll have the decorator handle the rest."

Will turned in Hannibal's arms. "No, I want to do it."

"William, you are pregnant." He reminded kissing the Omega's forehead.

"Yes, I am and that means that if you don't let me, you, Doctor Lecter, will never hear the end of it." Will said matter-of-factly. "You've got all the money and the connections, you can buy anything for our pup. I can't, I just want to decorate their nursery for them myself."

Hannibal sighed internally. He couldn't argue with Will, the boy wasn't wrong. Hannibal had done very well for himself over the years and often thought little of money. He had antiques and state of the art appliances all over the house while Will had shown up with nothing but the clothes on his back. A little painting and decorating wouldn't be too strenuous and, with him being so early on in his pregnancy, nothing had to be rushed. If the was what Will wanted to do for their pup, then Hannibal could hardly say no.

"Fine." Hannibal relented. "But no heavy lifting."

~X~

Will had been in the nursery for most of the day mulling over ideas and jotting things down with Winston. Nursery décor didn't seem the sort of thing Will would have really bothered with but when Hannibal stopped to think about it, Will hadn't ever had anything of his very own before and was determined to ensure the same wasn't true for their pup. He'd never let their perfect child suffer the pain and loneliness he had. So, Hannibal hadn't made a fuss, had let Will do as he pleased just as promised and quietly started to wonder if this was also partly some ultra early form of nesting. It was dinner that finally lured the omega downstairs; a simple meal of Confit de Canard since Will had wanted something that didn't 'take forever to say' for dinner as the omega had put it.

After their peaceful dinner with conversation that drifted back and forth from the baby and Hannibal's work to Winston and literature, the two retired to the living room so Will could watch the fishing show he'd taken to. Hannibal couldn't have cared less about the show, but he enjoyed these gentle moments with his mate. His hands had cut so many down and would forever be stained in blood, but they also cradled Will softly and brought pleasure to him. As the host went on about trout, Hannibal's large hand rested atop Will's belly while his thumb moved comfortingly back and forth. Winston had been given a rather large treat to gnaw on – spoilt was Winston.

Will's voice pulled Hannibal out of his inner thoughts after a moment, there was uncertainty in it which Hannibal wished to squash quickly.

"Hannibal, could – could – never mind."

"Go on," the alpha encouraged as he shifted to better regard his mate. "You can ask me anything, Will."

The omega worried his lip a moment before the request finally left him. "I know it's a little silly maybe, but … could we debate Hansel if the pup is a boy?"

So far Will had preferred simple and more traditional western names such as Thomas and Adam, so Hansel seemed rather out of left field for him. Still, this name clearly had a reason and Hannibal wanted to know exactly what it was.

"Why Hansel?" He asked with a kiss to his mate's temple.

"When I was … *back there*, my friend Beverly would read to me when Jimmy could risk letting us out. There weren't many books around so she told me stories from memory. She's a bit older than me, you'd like her. She could only really remember fairy tales, and it was Hansel and Gretel she remembered best. That was my favorite because – well, they escaped their nightmare even though we couldn't." The television had been totally forgotten about by this point. "I know people might think it stupid, but -"

"It means something important to you." Will nodded. He'd just expected for his alpha to rebuff the idea of naming their pup after a Grimm character. "I think that's a rather fitting name. It could be a middle name, should you like?"

"Really?" Will's eyes brightened in that way Hannibal adored.

Hannibal nodded. "Of course. We could perhaps start a list of names. What about for a girl?"

"I don't know," he shrugged. "I'd not thought that far along, I've hardly been pregnant two months."

"I'm not the one choosing colors for the nursery, brangusis."

With that, Hannibal reached for his wineglass on the coffee table and the pair returned to the fishing show. Hansel wasn't a name he'd have ever considered, but it meant something to Will and, as Hannibal knew all too well by this point, he couldn't deny his mate.

~X~

Jack sat alone in his office grumbling internally as he sipped on a glass of aged scotch. The House had taken time and hard work to turn it into what it was; his silent partner in all this had put in a good amount of money to ensure their secrecy and quality of omegas, while Jack had handed all the management and inner workings. No omega should have ever been able to escape the House, not with the guards, security gates and cameras on the stairwells: admittedly the cameras were angled at waist height to keep their visitor's identities secret should law enforcement ever discover them, but a omega in tattered clothes and no shoes should have been easily distinguished from the alphas. The beta watching the cameras had just happened to have fallen asleep – something he'd paid for with his life – but Jack couldn't shake the feeling it had all been too coincidental.

He'd even gone out searching for Will himself since his alpha senses were significantly superior to those of betas, only to become quickly overloaded by the numerous scents of animals and extreme cold had always hindered an alpha's sense of smell. Tracking his scent had led Jack to a desolate road about two miles to the north before it had faded away. The asphalt had been partially coated in ice and there hadn't been any whiff of blood but there didn't have to be blood for a car to have killed someone. That left Jack with two possible conclusions; either someone had hit Will with their car then panicked and dumped him somewhere, or they'd taken pity on Will and taken him somewhere safe like a hospital. While death by car seemed a little too easy, Jack hadn't heard anything to indicate an omega had been taken to a hospital or that law enforcement had been alerted to the House's existence. Will wasn't a stupid one – far from it, that was why he appealed to so many of the House's visitors – he'd have told anyone who'd listen about what had been going on

in an attempt to rescue the other captive omegas. Increasing alpha guard rotation in the grounds for the next few months just in case. Maybe there hadn't ever been a car and Will had simply died of exposure. Yes, that would have been for the best even with how much money it lost him.

After a deep sigh Jack knocked back the last of his scotch. He couldn't linger in his office all day though so soon found himself wandering the halls eyeing the green and red in-use signs to the right of each room until he stopped at Alana's just as a beta guard let a visitor out. Jack could feel a murderous desire lingering inside the older, but that wasn't unusual for those the House catered to.

"Good afternoon, Lawrence."

While Lawrence fastened his belt and peered to Jack almost as though he'd forgotten who he was, the beta guard locked the door back up and tried to pretend he was invisible. Lawrence Wells was the most prolific alpha to frequent the House and had been coming and going for years.

"That little bitch isn't Will, but I'm having fun breaking her in." The old alpha chuckled. "Will had this sense of fight in him that was just so fun to play with." He nodded behind him to the maglocked door. "That one has it to, but it's raw. Don't worry, me and the other alphas will beat it out of her."

"I'm sure you will. I'll walk you out."

Will was clearly missed by many of the alphas who visited the brothel often, but Jack had no way of getting him back and refused look weak by dwelling on it in public.

~X~

It had reached a point where it was rather safe to say Chilton had just about reached the end of his rope. Dexter Hightower, the Von Schulte Asylum's administrator, was either inept, intentionally aggravating, stupid or some combination of each. He ran a large hand down his face with exasperation as he leaned forward in the guest chair of Hightower's office. He wanted to go home and wash of the layer of idiocy the Von Schulte Asylum had left on him like dirt.

"We really need to move this along, you can't let him put this off any longer. This isn't something he should be dictating."

"It's protocol," Hightower insisted. "Urie attacked another patient, he had to be put into solitary."

Chilton's eye twitched. "Benjamin Urie only did that because his mate is in Baltimore and wants to get his transfer rejected so he can go back to her. Well boo fucking hoo, he can apply for bond privileges from this institution."

Before Hightower could even open his mouth a ear-shattering alarm went off plunging the whole asylum into chaos. He knew, deep in his stomach Chilton already knew exactly what was happening, the call Hightower received a few seconds later just confirmed it.

"Urie's out, isn't he?"

The administrator just nodded. Goddam incompetent betas shouldn't have been left in charge of a coffee shop let alone a mental health facility filled with criminally insane patients.

"Please follow me to the security office."

So, with little other choice, Chilton did just that. Down sterile hallways, down two flights of stairs and into the security office where they found a mass of monitors taking up half the room. A lone guard stood watching the carnage while he related information to his fellow guards. Maybe the should have put the security guard in charge of the place, at least he seemed to know how to do his damn job.

"Where the fuck is he going, Vega?" Hightower demanded as he inspected the plethora of screens for himself.

Meanwhile Chilton stood with his arms folded knowing he'd have to take Urie back to the BSHCI regardless now. This whole nightmare had been for nothing and Hightower's ineptitude would surely reflect poorly on him as well. Why did his constant misfortunes seem to be a running gag?

"Sir, Bateman and Urie are out. Urie was complaining of chest pains and taken to the infirmary where Bateman took the chance to slip out of his restraints. We can confirm six guards are dead as well as a nurse. They seem to have separated though. We've lost sight of Urie and Bateman has made it up four floors. We don't know how he moved so fast, but one more floor and he's on this level with us."

Chilton's stomach lurched into his throat. Same level as them? Had Hightower actually shuffled him into danger? How moronic was this beta?!

"Who is Bateman and what is here for?" Not something he wanted to know, but something he needed to.

"You should look more afraid, Mister Chilton." Hightower said over his shoulder. "Bateman is here because he likes to cut and gut as he puts it. Think Jack the Ripper on crack."

Nope. No, Chilton needed to return to the office and wait for all of this to be dealt with. That poorly decorated little office was where he'd sit quietly away from the murderers. Chilton may have been an alpha, but he wasn't an overly brave or strong one – that was part of the reason he hated Hannibal – and would always slink away instead of facing confrontation head on when possible.

With hardly a breath he'd pulled open the security room door and slipped out into the hallway, Vega called for him to come back but Chilton ignored them – not his hospital, not his problem. Yet, as he turned a corner to the stairwell, Chilton met the eyes of Bateman ascending them. He had the blood of six or so people on him from head to toe, looked like he'd been rolling around in an slaughterhouse. Chilton might not have been a powerful alpha capable of dominating a situation when he needed to, but Bateman was and dominate he did. The murderer chuckled as he stepped closer, a scalpel from the infirmary in his bloody hand. Before Chilton to scurry backward, Bateman launched up the stairs and swiped with the scalpel cutting his skin from cheekbone to upper lip. He stumbled backward onto the floor with panicked breaths and a burning sting in his face. The scalpel came down again only for Chilton's survival instinct to kick in and manage to knock it away. Maybe something in the back of his mind had praised him for disarming a serial killer so quickly, but then the broken glass Bateman had appropriated from somewhere plunged into his belly splitting it open from left to right. Bateman didn't know who Chilton was or why he was there, it didn't matter as long as blood poured down the stairs in a beautiful crimson waterfall.

Laying on the cold floor as blackness closed in around the edges of his eyes and the tips of his toes grew cold, Chilton could only listen to bloody footsteps move away toward the security room. In that moment he didn't think about his life accomplishments or not wanting to die, or even about his mother. No, out of everything in the world that could have come to mind, Hannibal Lecter popped into his head. Specifically, the expression he'd shot Chilton in his office that day he'd mentioned the House. He'd brushed it off in the moment but the look had lingered in the back of his mind; it had been so unlike Hannibal, as though a mask had slipped revealing a demon underneath. Maybe dying like this had been a lesser of two evils, because Chilton never wanted to see what lurked under Hannibal's handsome mask again.

Chapter 8

Hannibal had only attended Frederick Chilton's funeral to fully confirm to himself he was indeed dead and avoid questions of why he'd not gone. More people had shown up to pay their respects than he'd expected, but Hannibal assumed the man had surely had some family who'd felt obligated to show themselves. Everybody else seemed to be there for the same reason as Hannibal, just colleagues and peers who'd shown up out of professional responsibility. Chilton was gone though and, while Hannibal approved of him bleeding out alone on the floor, Hannibal had urged to be the one who cut him down. He'd wanted to draw every scrap of information out of the man then cut him into pieces and allow Will to eat him, to let Will take back control and know he'd won in the end.

When Chilton had died, Hannibal's access to the House had along with him. If this went on then Hannibal wouldn't ever kill those who'd tortured and abused his darling mate. However, Will was adjusting to his new life nicely proving how strong a person he was. It might have been better to put his revenge on Will's behalf on hold for a short while, Hannibal could be eerily patient when he needed to and it seemed only fair for Will's sake and that of their unborn pup. The House could think they'd escaped consequences for the time being, Hannibal would wait for his moment.

As the weeks continued to roll on and on, Hannibal had done all he could to get Will out of the house and more comfortable with people. That was how Hannibal had ended up taking his beloved mate to a high-end children's boutique to select a crib and rocking chair. While Hannibal had still had to do the majority of the talking, Will had seemed more comfortable around other pregnant omegas – not that he'd shown any desire to approach them. In that boutique, Will saw how alphas should have treated their omegas, like the partners in life they were rather than a hole to use as pleased. Hannibal would have bought every last item in the place had it made his mate happy, but the rustic crib had apparently been enough to delight Will. It didn't take a genius to see Hannibal and Will had very different tastes when it came to décor and aesthetics. While Hannibal preferred a more refined look with detailed ornate accents, Will preferred things much simpler; a warm, homely vibe with a color palette which mostly consisted of blues, greens and gray. Yes, outwardly Hannibal and Will seemed much too different to have been a good match, but on the inside they shared a darkness and understanding no other mated pair ever would. Will's darkness might have been immature and underdeveloped, but, in time, Hannibal would see it bloom.

~X~

After the unfortunate death of one of their omegas – Beth had always been an odd one, quiet and disinclined to wash when given the opportunity – Mason Verger had been sent out to acquire a new one to fill the room. While Jack's network was both extensive and efficient for tracking down suitable victims, Mason seemed to have a natural talent for finding a diamond in the ruff. He'd shown up much faster than anybody had expected one Wednesday morning with a large suitcase that vibrated with desperation; whoever had been locked inside fought desperately to free themselves from the confines of such a small space while Mason just smirked. When muffled screams begging for help erupted, he swiftly kicked the suitcase onto its side.

"Shut up and be good."

Mason waited long enough for Gideon to show his face then hauled the suitcase upstairs and into Beth's old room. When Jack had finally gotten a report on the girl he discovered she was sixteen and named Piper, Mason had been keeping track of omegas in the local school districts and she'd just so happened to be the first easy target. Kidnapping one from a school hadn't surprised Jack, Mason had done it before and seemed to treat it like a sport. Other than Abigail, Will had been the only other teenager at the House until his escape, and most of their clientele liked the young ones. Understandably the girl had been terrified when Mason had unzipped the suitcase so Gideon could do a quick medical exam; healthy just as they'd expected. Jame Gumb had taken an instant liking to her which had led even some of the alphas working there to pity her; Gumb had very little self-control and a habit of breaking things.

Now if they could just find another teenage male omega the House would once again be able to cater to all their guests sick and twisted needs. Jack had even debated extending the building, but that was a little hard to do out in the woods inside a concrete building left over from the Cold War, especially when they couldn't be noticed. How his business partner had even discovered the abandoned research building was beyond Jack, but discover it he had and Jack intended to make full use of it.

~X~

Far more months than Hannibal would have liked had passed before he'd been able to convince Will to let a doctor that wasn't him check on their pup and get an ultrasound done. While he could have used his alpha voice to demand Will's consent, he wasn't the sort of man who ordered his beloved omega about and had no desire to remind Will of the House. Still, Hannibal had finally gotten through to Will and made him see that speaking with a doctor and letting an ultrasound take place was what was best for their pup – and Will would do anything for their pup. That was how they'd ended up at the hospital on Wednesday afternoon with Will nervously in an exam room with his shirt pulled up exposing his baby bump while he gripped Hannibal's hand.

"That's cold." He grumbled as gel was squeezed onto his belly.

Being the loving and thoughtful alpha that he was, Hannibal had requested a beta doctor to keep Will calm. His boy didn't trust any other alphas and didn't quite know how to interact with fellow omegas – not that there were many omegan doctors thanks to society.

"Sorry about that, Mister Graham." She apologized and set to work.

Meanwhile, Will gripped his mate's hand tight and worried his lip while Hannibal smiled down at him comfortingly before turning his attention back to the beta doctor.

"How is the pup, Doctor Lutz?"

Will had heard Hannibal use several different tones since he met him, all calculated to suggest or re-enforce certain things. With Will he used the soothing one full of love and care, but with Doctor Lutz it was a tone of authority Will had termed as Hannibal's 'surgeon voice'. It was well annunciated and left those he used it on with no doubt he was a medical professional of quality who

didn't need things dumbing down for him, nor did he accept any words that were even remotely denigrating.

"Well, Doctor Lecter, it looks like everything is a-okay in there." She spoke without looking away from the screen. "There is one thing though."

Will paled. "What?!"

Doctor Lutz spun the screen around so the mates could see for themselves. Hannibal knew exactly what he was looking at which caused his eyes to widen, but Will didn't know.

"You're gonna want to start using the plural."

"Twins." Hannibal stated calmly.

"Twins." Doctor Lutz repeated only for Will's mouth to fall open as he stared at the screen.

Will's mind split into two very distinct halves in that moment. The first half went into what was essentially panic mode and began screaming at him that, even with Hannibal's help, he couldn't raise twins, that he was too young and all other manner of negative things. However, the other half beamed, it sang with delight that he was an omega who could give his mate twins, a good omega worthy of a thoroughbred alpha.

Hannibal, intelligent man that he was, saw all of this cross Will's mind and squeezed his hand to steady his thoughts before he bent down to kiss Will's forehead.

"Would you like to know genders?" She asked, totally unaware the silent conversation that passed between the mates.

"It's up to you, mylimasis." Hannibal told Will who sat a moment as his thoughts accepted his new reality. Not even a year ago he'd been locked in a tiny room for alpha's to use as they pleased, now he was caring the pups of a serial killer and cannibal. His new reality would be a lot of hard work and lack sleep for a while, but it was much preferred to his past. "You're allowed to say no."

"Maybe it could be a surprise?"

They'd already chosen green for the nursery and, beyond buying a second crib, nothing would need altering regardless of what their twins turned out to be.

After a nod Hannibal turned from his mate to the doctor.

"No, Doctor Lutz. Thank you, but if Will wants it to be a surprise then a surprise it shall be."

"Not a problem. I'll print you out some images and then you should be good to go." The last bit was directed to Will.

Will was handed a scratchy paper towel to clean the gel off of his belly while Doctor Lutz got them those ultrasound photos, then they departed the hospital quietly. Will halted when he reached the main entrance, he'd been so busy clutching the photographs of their pups that he'd totally forgotten his scarf. While the harshness of winter had begun to pass, Baltimore remained cold and Hannibal had given him that lovely blue scarf.

"Em, Hannibal?" Maroon eyes glanced down to the omega. "I'm sorry, I forgot my scarf. It's on the table in the exam room."

"That's all right. I'll fetch it for you. Do you want to sit here and wait or come back with me?"

Will gestured to a few plastic, uncomfortable looking chairs to their left. "I'll sit over there. I don't want to walk back up."

That was understandable, he'd put on quite a bit of weight recently – though that made a bit more sense now he knew he had two of Hannibal's pups inside him. As soon as he was sat, Hannibal departed to retrieve Will's scarf while Will avoided making eye-contact with anybody in his general vicinity; eye-contact would mean talking and he didn't want to talk to them. Since he was so focused on not seeing, Will never spotted her. Instinctively a hand found its way to his rounded belly while people went this way and that around him.

"You two are going to be strong and brave like your papa, aren't you? Yeah, you be brave like him. Papa and Daddy love you both."

For several more moments he sat there thanking deities he didn't believe in quietly for letting it be Hannibal who'd hit Will with his car that night in Wolf Trap.

She watched as Hannibal returned and wrapped the scarf around the pregnant Omega's neck, neither knowing she was there let alone what she was thinking. A strange thing to be thankful for in the eyes of normal people – who'd be pleased to be struck by a car? - but Will truly was grateful for Hannibal. The man was a murderer so calling him a godsend didn't quite seem appropriate, but he had loomed out of the darkness like some kind of powerful entity. Demonsend? Maybe that fit Hannibal's arrival in Will's life better.

~X~

Through the lavishly decorated living room walked Hannibal to find it vacant of his sweet omegan boy. Instead he found Winston alone by the dying fire fast asleep and snoring. The alpha worried not though because he knew that, if Will wasn't with Winston, then there was only one other place he'd be at that time of the day. Sure enough, once he'd ascended the stairs, Hannibal found Will in the nursery pushing the rocking chair toward the west wall to make room for a second crib.

"I said no heavy lifting." Will spun round clearly startled; Hannibal had mastered the art of stealth.

"Sorry." Hannibal walked over and wrapped his arms around the shorter omega from behind, pressing his chest to Will's back. "It was just the chair."

"I suppose I can't be displeased over just the rocking chair." He kissed Will's temple. "I assume you're making room for our other pup's crib." Will nodded. "Don't worry, I'll purchase a second one and the nursery will be perfect for you again."

Will managed to turn around in Hannibal's embrace then, a little awkward with the growing bump between them, but Will wasn't a quitter.

"I didn't do this for me," he gestured to the room around them. "I did it for our pups. So-" He cut himself off abruptly with a grin and pulled one of Hannibal's large hands to his stomach. "They're kicking again."

That was Hannibal's pups inside there, the pups he'd never thought he'd have. He'd been a father to Micsha long ago – his sweet sister who it hurt to think of. Will might have thought Hannibal sent by some powerful entity just for him, but Hannibal felt much the same. No other omega could have understood or accepted him in the ways Will had. If souls actually existed, Hannibal would happily lay his at Will's feet.

They shared a passionate kiss of love, protection and hormones that only broke apart when one of the pups gave a painful kick to Will's side causing him to wince.

Hannibal smiled softly. "They want dinner, which just so happens to be ready."

With Will's hand in his, Hannibal led them down to the dining room which smelt wonderfully of rosemary and chives from the wall boxes. How a room could be introverted while demanding attention was beyond Will, but Hannibal's décor had managed it with startling levels of success. To be perfectly honest, the nursery was probably the only room in the house one didn't automatically feel like they should be brooding in.

"Who are we eating today?" Asked Will as his mate helped him into his chair before going to serve.

"A salesman who had failed to grasp the meaning of no. Travis Clarke was his name if you meant specifically."

The day after they'd taken in Winston, Hannibal had sat down with Will in that very dining room and told him everything. Will now knew his mate wasn't any serial killer, he was the Chesapeake Ripper and had an extensive kill count. Will had sat quietly listening to each new truth with a surprisingly logical mind. Murder, cannibalism, mutilation, Will had heard it all and, at the end, calmly asked what was for dinner. They'd not needed some big display of affection or tears, those three words: 'what's for dinner?' had told Hannibal everything he needed to know; his omega accepted him and was truly the most perfect omega to walk the earth. Only a man with a dark side of his own could have so easily slotted into Hannibal's life, and Hannibal wanted to see it flourish.

"Pot-au-Feu," announced the alpha as he placed the first course's broth down before his mate. "I hope you enjoy."

"I'm sure I will. Everything you prepare tastes delicious even if I can't pronounce half of it." Hannibal breathed out a laugh as he seated himself. "Can you dumb down whatever you just said for those of us not who aren't genius doctors with a skill for cooking?"

"Oh, my sweet Will, I doubt you ever need anything dumbing down. The dish is reminiscent of English and Irish boiled broths but with a much deeper flavor. I'm afraid my bouquet garni is a secret, but you'll find a lovely aromatic perfume to the broth. I'll serve the meat and vegetables in the second course with a nice horseradish sauce."

Will simply nodded. He'd never really had the option to be picky when it came to food but he could see how much joy the act of cooking brought to Hannibal. Many so-called normal people would likely think Hannibal an irredeemable monster, but Will could see that, at heart, Hannibal would always be more of a creator than a destroyer. He created music, art and even helped to create the

lives inside Will. He turned bloody deaths into a journey for the palette and posed the bodies as a stunning reminder that death was beautiful.

They enjoyed their meal while discussing the discovery of Doctor Lutz's news of twins. It had been quite the revelation and a startling one for Will. One baby so soon after their mating had been daunting for Will, especially while only nineteen, but twins was something else entirely. As long as Will had Hannibal though everything would be fine.

Winston wandered in towards the end of dinner hoping for a few table scraps of salesman and, though he tried to dissuade Will from feeding the dog from the table, to point out it was rude to feed something he'd worked so hard on to the dog right in front of him, Hannibal hadn't had the heart to push the subject; especially when he'd seen the bright smile on the younger man's face. No, Will didn't intend to be rude and toss away the meal Hannibal prepared for him, it was more as though he'd wanted to share Hannibal's creation and make Winston happy. If this was the level of care and attention Will showed to a stray dog, Hannibal knew his mate would be a perfect parent to their pups.

After dinner had finished with a nice chocolate torte, Will had been yawning and decided to retire early. The day had been long and Hannibal couldn't argue with a few extra hours of holding his pregnant omega close. So, with a loving kiss, Hannibal had sent Will off to bed while he'd remained to tidy up, ensure all was pristine and in its rightful place then to scoot Winston into the large mud room for the night. Despite having grown rather fond of Winston himself and Will preferring he let the dog have full run of the place, Hannibal hadn't been convinced to let Winston wander freely at night – maybe if they'd trained him as a guard dog. Once Winston was curled up on his large dog bed – a big black thing with little white bones that stood out boldly against the rest of the décor – Hannibal had closed the door and headed up to bed.

Will had changed quickly into boxers and a gray t-shirt and already climbed into bed when Hannibal entered the room to begin his own ablutions. The moment Hannibal had slipped into bed, omega had cuddled into alpha for warmth and comfort that Hannibal had only been too happy to provide. They shared I love you's before slipping off to sleep with one of Hannibal's large hands rested atop Will's belly.

Chapter 9

Margot sat quietly and unassumingly on a bench so she could watch the mated pair walk their dog around Patterson Park. She'd watched them subtly for a few days now and was certain the omega was indeed Will, he looked cleaner and significantly healthier, but it was him. She'd spent years under the thumb of her brother and had seen the dark horrors he was capable of committing, sometimes he'd forced her to go along on his trips to 'pick up more merchandise' as Mason had often put it. Margot hadn't liked it, never would, but she'd come to realize that having been born a beta was the only reason Mason hadn't tossed her into the House. It was unclear when she'd actually started helping Mason find omegas, she'd have probably told a jury she'd been forced but that wasn't true; Mason could be violent towards her but he'd never actually pressured her into assisting. No, Margot had begun helping to feel powerful, to remind herself she might not have been an alpha, but she sure as hell wasn't a weak omega; she was better than them. Will Graham had been an unusual case, she and Mason had bought him from his worthless father outright in a surprisingly business-like manner several years ago.

Hearing about Will's escape hadn't really bothered Margot, it hadn't been her fault so why should it have? Jack and Mason seething was enough dramatics in her mind. However, where alphas and her sadistically determined brother had failed, Margot had succeeded for she'd found the lost omega. It had been quite by accident while she'd been at the hospital, brown eyes had just happened to glance around to find Will sat on a chair as though he'd not been raised in an illegal brothel and wasn't being searched for. She'd only seen him a few times in passing since they'd bought him, but there wasn't any denying that was Will. Before she'd been able to decide what to do a handsome alpha had wrapped a red scarf around Will's neck and escorted him out.

Still unsure if reporting to Mason and the House was the best thing to do, Margot had decided to just keep an eye on Will and this alpha. She doubted Will would recognize her but she'd kept her distance anyway. especially from that alpha. He was a thoroughbred, that was plain to see, and something told Margot he – Doctor Hannibal Lecter as she'd found out – hid something very powerful and very bloody underneath that charming mask of his. Yes, keeping a good distance from Hannibal was the wisest course of action. Once she'd realized he'd mated Will and gotten him pregnant, telling the House didn't seem worth it; wasn't like it would be worth fighting a thoroughbred just for Will.

Yet, Margot continued to watch them. Will was just a pathetic little omega who'd been used by more alphas than he could count, but he got a successful handsome alpha and babies while she sat there as a bland beta. It wasn't fair! Omegas were needy little things who couldn't survive on their own, she was a beta who'd managed to ingratiate herself into her brother's dark world – Margot was better than Will! A loving and protective partner, a luxurious home and even the damn dog, those things should have all been hers.

She'd done some digging, she knew of Hannibal's work and reputation, knew to avoid his wrath. However, Will had helped himself to things he shouldn't have and Margot would make him pay for it. She'd go back to the hospital and look through Will's records. Jealousy had always been a powerful motivator. Why should a free-use omega get a family while she remained alone and childless under her brother's thumb?

Will's face shouldn't have shown that much happiness. He shouldn't have had a rich alpha holding him close as they walked, and he sure as hell shouldn't have had twins inside him when Margot

couldn't even have one.

~X~

Beverly's room had become a meeting room of sorts when Price could risk letting them congregate rooms. It was the very early hours of the morning – the only real time any of the omegas got a proper chance to sleep since Jack had shuffled off home to be with Bella and nobody ever came in at 2:45am. The alpha guards would do their patrols of the exterior while the beta guards mostly found a place to sit and took turns staring at the cameras. Would have seemed like a good time to escape had it not been for Mason Verger and his alpha wanna-be gang guarding all the exits. Arrogant little bunch who seemed like they just wanted Jack to be proud of them or that he'd somehow magically turn them all into alphas; a fittingly vampiric fantasy.

They'd got probably another twenty minutes before a guard did another loop of their floor, so gather the group had. Price leaned against the door trying not to hate himself while Beverly sat on her bed with Alana who cried softly. Getting used to the House wasn't a natural thing, more of a survival tactic, but it took a great many years to develop. Brian had shuffled closer to comfort the beta while Abigail simply stood there quietly as she was one to do.

"Will we ever be able to go home?" Alana asked as Beverly rubbed her arm comfortingly.

"I think we are home." Abigail's response depressed the whole room, but they couldn't exactly argue with her, not when she could hardly even remember anything before the House. "Maybe Will was the only one free, maybe dying is the only way to get out."

Everybody paled. They'd never admit it but Abigail had always been a slightly odd one, be that from the traumas she'd face or something else they didn't know and wouldn't comment. However, they couldn't let themselves think something so morbid. She'd been fairly close to Will, despite being only four years older than her he'd been rather fatherly toward her. Beverly had tried to help Will but him escaping had taken a toll on the thirteen-year-old Abigail they'd not imagined.

"We don't know for sure that he's dead." Price pointed out as he grabbed Brian's hand to ground himself.

Four sets of eyes snapped to Price then, all with a mix of hope and panic in their eyes. Beverly's mouth fluttered a second or two before words finally managed to seep out.

"Jack told me that his alphas had killed Will. He's dead."

Jack had beaten it into the omegas that they were to call him master and nothing else, but Beverly refused to do such a thing in private.

Price's expression grew puzzled and had his brow furrow deeply. That couldn't be true, if that had happened he'd have known about it.

"Beverly, Will was never found. Alpha's lost the scent in the woods because of all the snow and animals. Besides, if Will had been caught he'd have been beaten and brought back here so Jack

could make an example of him before putting him back to work, not killed. Will brought in so much money for Jack that he'd not kill him."

All fell silent then as the door clicked open and Barney slipped inside with a plate. Barney Matthews was the only other person at the House trusted by Price and the omegas. He was a good man with a surprisingly professional personality, genuinely cared for those around him. Price wasn't quite sure how the dark-skinned man had gotten himself wrapped up with the House, but he was pleased to have an ally amongst the guards.

Barney set the plate down on the bed – just a few sandwiches he'd managed to scrounge up for the omegas, Jack didn't have them starved or anything, but none of them were ever not hungry. Brian thanked him and helped himself to one of the sandwiches.

"Is everything okay in here?" Barney asked when he noticed the mood in the small room hardly big enough for them all to fit in. "Something happen?"

"Jack told Beverly that Will had been found and killed." Price told his fellow beta. "He made her think Will had been slaughtered."

Barney shook his head. "Nah, that ain't true. Nobody could find Will, he was just gone. I mean, Jimmy and me weren't really searching properly, but even the alphas couldn't track him. As far as we're concerned, Will got away."

"Then why hasn't the police shown up?" Alana questioned probably a little too loudly. "If he'd escaped this place then surely he'd have sent the police back for everybody else."

Barney shrugged. "I don't know. There could be a load of reasons the cops haven't come. Look at how many cops come through here. What I do know is that none of the House guards – not Verger or Jack or anybody else, has found Will."

"Maybe he died of exposure," lamented Abigail as she picked up one of the sandwiches for herself.

They all hated to admit it, but that was a very real possibility. All they could do was hope Will lived and that one day he'd send someone to help them.

"Will's brave, we all know that."

Conversation died off after Price's attempt to reassure them all. Will could have been dead, but surely could had to be better than was.

After about ten minutes everybody had eaten their sandwiches so Barney collected up the plate and made his way to the door.

"I need to get back. I told Verger I was just going to do my rounds. If I'm gone longer he'll send one of his men to find me. Jimmy, you should lock everyone back up before the next check."

Then he was gone and silence again descended for a few moments until they'd all mentally prepared themselves to return to the tiny boxes that were their rooms – their cells. Price poked his head out into the hallway to check the coast was clear, then ushered Abigail and Alana back into their rooms swiftly before he unlocked Brian's at the far end of the hall just before the stairs. They slipped inside and instantly wrapped one another up in a hug. It was tight and full of need that managed to sooth their tormented souls. Beverly had taken the first opportunity to help Will escape

but Price didn't know how to help Brian, especially since security had been increased. He'd no idea how to save the man he loved. They kissed. An omega being in a relationship with a beta was unusual but not unheard of and proved omegas weren't needy little things that couldn't survive without an alpha.

"You know, Jimmy," began Brian with a smirk. "I'm not tired."

"Oh really?"

They kissed again, it was all they could do for there was never time for more – even if there were time, they'd not be able to risk getting caught. Still, that Brian trusted him enough to want things to progress further meant the world to Price. He adored Brian and longed to be a partner worthy of him rather than just a kind jailer.

~X~

Will had popped the last bite of breakfast into his mouth and savored the rich flavor that coated his tongue all while Hannibal watched on happily. Seeing Will enjoy the meals he prepared was truly gratifying to him. Unfortunately, breakfast had to be a speedy affair that morning as Hannibal had a a morning appointment to get to and a fair amount of paperwork for a court case he'd been requested as an expert witness in. That was why, as soon as the dining table had been cleared, Hannibal had donned his burgundy suit jacket and bent to kiss Will goodbye before leaving for the day. Will had remained at the dining room table for a few moments to pet Winston, then the two had wandered into the living room to watch one of Will's fishing shows. Hannibal hadn't once complained about watching them with him but Will knew they weren't of any interest to an alpha like Hannibal.

Settling on the pristine sofa had been a delight for Will, in recent weeks his back had started to twinge in pain from the extra weight of the growing twins. A lazy day was in order – not that Will had chores or anything to do really beyond keeping an eye on Winston and letting him out into the yard. Maybe he'd finish reading *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* later in the afternoon – Will had liked the similarity to his alpha, how everybody saw Hannibal as an upstanding doctor but on the inside their was a demon looking for its next victim.

Before his show could even fully start, let alone get around to reading, the doorbell chimed. It echoed around the quiet house. Will paused, Hannibal had only just left and nobody ever really came over unless Hannibal had a dinner party planned which he'd not done in months. Curious, Will left the living room to answer the door and found a woman dressed in a midwife's uniform. Something about her was vaguely familiar but he couldn't quite place it. Still, a beta midwife on his doorstep was not the most concerning thing he could have opened the door to.

"Can I help you?" Will asked holding the door open, voice slightly tainted by uncertainty.

"Hi, my name is Margot. You're Mister Graham?" Will nodded. "Your alpha, a Doctor Lecter, he asked the hospital to send someone over to check on you so," She laughed. "here I am."

Will lifted an eyebrow. Hannibal hadn't mentioned any of this to him and he wasn't the absent-minded sort. Still, it had taken quite some time for Will to actually go to the hospital so maybe

Hannibal had planned home visits instead. That just looped him back to his mate not having told him anything about a midwife visit.

Despite his caution, the woman had known his and Hannibal's names and nothing about her seemed far-fetched even if he was sure he'd seen her somewhere before; maybe he'd spotted her at Doctor Lutz's office. So, not wanting to slam the door in her face only for Hannibal to reprimand him later, Will let Margot in and offered her something to drink. A polite 'water would be fantastic, thank you' had Will vanish to the kitchen a moment only to return to a vacant living room.

"Where did she go, Winston?"

Suddenly the dog started to growl but, before Will could turn, a needle plunged into his neck. His legs instantly went weak and the water glass crashed to the floor smashing into fragments. Winston was kicked away with spite and Will grasped the back of the sofa to hold himself up. What had she done to him? Everything started to go black and then will collapsed into the puddle of water and glass. The last thing he saw was Margot throw something heavy – a bronze figurine – at Winston to keep the dog away.

Chapter 10

A slow fluttering signalled Will's uneasy return to consciousness, his neck hurt like a bee sting while his head throbbed unrelentingly – had he gone to university and experienced the hangover after his first kegger, Will would have had something to liken the ache to. For a moment blue eyes refused to focus on anything but eventually he realized he'd been placed gently on his and Hannibal's bed; a safe space. Awkwardly he'd pushed himself up onto his elbows then fished around on the nightstand until he found his glasses to return himself to the world of defined lines. As he took slow breaths and tried to recall what had happened, he rubbed at his baby bump as a way to comfort both himself and the twins.

A squeak had his head snap to the door as Winston nudged it open with his nose and hurried in wanting attention and to know his master was well. 'Bandage?' Will's mind questioned when he saw the white wrapped around Winston's middle, then it all flooded back to him; that woman had kicked and thrown things at Winston, she'd stuck something in Will's neck!

"That bitch!"

Will forced himself up onto shaky legs once he'd confirmed to himself that Winston wasn't too seriously injured, then spent the next fifteen or so seconds wobbling back and forth to clear the foggy dizziness inside his mind. When he made for the stairs it was with Winston trailing slowly behind him on his own shaky legs.

Silence greeted Will, a heavy silence which unnerved him and made him cradle his baby bump instinctively. With quiet steps he made his way down the stairs and back into the living room all the time looking for the woman who'd called herself Margot. Empty, the living room was empty, in fact the only indication anyone had entered the room all day was the handbag Margot had arrived with and figurine she'd thrown at Winston which now lay on the floor by the fireplace. Will hadn't ever thought much of that bronze figurine before, but he'd known it was old and ridiculously expensive.

Where was Margot? Was that even her real name? Will hated himself for being so stupid, he never should have believed her when Hannibal hadn't said a word about a home visit. He'd been an idiot. He'd thought there was something familiar about her from the moment he'd opened the door.

"You should have listened to your instincts, moron."

None of this made any sense though, whatever she'd planned had to have been cruel, violent and bloody but he'd been left comfortably on his bed while Winston's wound had been treated. People didn't suddenly change their minds once they were so far into their plans, Will wouldn't find a note tacked to the fridge with something along the lines of: Changed my mind. Sorry about your dog. Toodles.

Unsure of what else to do, and knowing the cell Hannibal had bought him was in the kitchen, Will walked toward said kitchen to call his mate for help. Yet, before he even reached the dining room, Will spotted the basement door had been left ajar – that door was *never* top for it was where Hannibal did his darker work. While he wasn't exactly forbidden from the basement since he'd told Hannibal he was fully aware of his murderous nature, it wasn't part of the house Will had much cause to enter. Still, Will couldn't just ignore it and found himself descending the cold stairs instead of doing the more sensible thing of locating his phone.

It was much colder down there than upstairs, far more sterile in both appearance and scent. Will felt his heart rate spike when a clank of metal on metal echoed to him, but he pushed on.

"I didn't think you'd be awake so soon, Will."

The alpha startled Will as he emerged from behind a plastic curtain to find his mate with sleeves rolled to his elbows and latex gloves on his hands. Hannibal? Hannibal was there. Suddenly the twins were kicking having sensed their father and safety.

"You're here? What em – what happened?"

"You were drugged," the alpha began as he snared Will in his arms too comfort his beloved omega. "Don't worry about Winston, the wound wasn't too deep and I've cleaned and bandaged it already."

Will nodded, he'd been confused about the bandages when he'd first woken up but only Hannibal would have bothered treating Winston.

"Are the twins okay?"

"Yes, perfectly fine. I examined you while you were unconscious, their heartbeats are strong and there were no signs of distress. You can feel them moving?"

"Yeah."

"Then all is well," he kissed Will's temple. "Worry not.

"How are you here, Hannibal? You'd gone to work."

Hannibal nodded. "I had, but realized I'd left my cellphone. I returned to retrieve it only to find that woman looming over you."

So it was sheer dumb luck he and the twins were safe. A forgotten cellphone had saved his pups' lives.

"Where is she? Did you kill her?"

Hannibal released Will from the embrace then and pulled the plastic curtain to reveal a metal table to which Margot had been strapped. Not dead then.

"Our friend here is currently still alive. I sedated her – somewhat ironically – and left her here while you slept so I could see a patient. She'll come round soon and then we'll get some answers." Will was pulled back into Hannibal's arms and kissed deeply. "I'm so sorry, mylimasis, so very sorry. I should have protected you and our pups. What must you think of me as a mate and as an alpha? I love you."

Will's brow furrowed as they clung to one another. "How could I ever think less of you? I was the one who fell for her story and let her in, I was the one who put our pups in danger, I was the one who should have known better. You saved us, Hannibal. You're a fantastic alpha and a wonderful mate. I love you too, Hannibal." He snuggled in closer to Hannibal's strong chest. "My alpha."

Sweet Will. Sweet, perfect and understanding Will. When he'd returned home to hear Winston whimpering and smelt a heavy floral perfume that was both revolting and totally out of place, he'd surged into action driven only by the urge to defend his mate and unborn pups. Before Margot had

even realized she'd got company Hannibal had managed to pin her to the ground and begun choking her out; even a beta on their worst day was no match for an angry thoroughbred alpha. That had led him to sedating her quickly so he could tend to Will and later Winston before hurrying to his office to see a patient – cancelling at such short notice would have been both rude and suspicious. None of that mattered though, Will was safe and the patient hadn't been any the wiser.

"Are you going to kill her now?" Will queried as blue eyes glanced to Margot.

"Not yet, I'd like to speak with her before that to find out what provoked this. I'll not stand for my omega being threatened nor will I let her leave this earth without her providing a reason."

Outwardly, Hannibal might have appeared calm, but Wil knew the truth, he could feel the tension in Hannibal's broad shoulders and see that little vein on the side of his head pulse. Furious was the alpha – not that Will could blame him. For most of his life Will had thought all alphas were nothing but savage beasts driven only by their own desires and the need to feel superior, but the more life he experienced with Hannibal, the more he realized he'd only interacted with a single kind of alpha; the sort Hannibal would have called lesser alphas. He was capable of intense violence and calculated death when he wanted to be, but he also possessed charisma, a suave level of decorum and genuine love for those he deemed worthy. A devil in a suit was Hannibal Lecter, but he was Will's devil in a suit.

Knowing it would be a while longer before Margot woke up, Hannibal took Will upstairs to get him fed and make doubly sure he nor the twins were in any medical danger. As soon as they'd entered the kitchen Will had lowered himself into the armchair in the corner while Hannibal had set about preparing arancini from the extra risotto he'd prepared the previous day. While he normally preferred to prepare things from scratch rather than leaving parts of a meal loitering in his fridge, Will had rather taken to arancini and was something warming he could make fairly quickly since the rice had already been cooked.

"What did that woman say to you?" He asked from the island. "She has no identification in her bag, just a gun, drugs and photographs of us. I assume she pretended to be a nurse of some kind given her outfit."

Will nodded. "A midwife who called herself Margot. She said she was here for a home visit. You'd not said anything so I wasn't sure but she knew our names and that you're a doctor."

"Did she now?" Hannibal hummed to himself as he retrieved a bowl and arancini sizzled in the fryer. "I organized no such thing, which means this woman has done some research on us."

"I'm sorry, I should have never let her in."

That had the older man's eyes snap up to his mate and hands still. "You are not responsible for this, Will. You weren't to know."

Hannibal could say that as many times as he liked but Will wasn't sure he'd ever be convinced. If not for that sheer dumb luck he, the twins and even Winston – who'd settled upstairs – would have all been left cold for Hannibal discover long after it was too late. The rest of the conversation passed quietly with Will acting a little absent until Hannibal set a bowl of arancini in his lap with a small pot of homemade Marinara sauce. He ate mostly because he knew Hannibal wanted him to and listened to Hannibal's comforting words.

When the food had long since been eaten and Hannibal had assured the both of them that the pups were fine, they'd returned to the basement where Margot was still strapped to the table. Alpha had insisted omega hadn't had to follow, but there hadn't been any deterring him. Hannibal might have been the serial killer amongst them, but Will had his own darkness and wanted to see the reason for this attack cut out of Margot if needs be.

She lay there with wide eyes and heart racing, the sight of Hannibal apparently enough to almost trigger a panic attack. Wrists fought her bonds uselessly while Hannibal removed his mask to show the beast that lurked beneath.

"You're finally awake, Margot. Is that your real name or just one you made up? I mean, it is rather rude to hold myself and my mate at such a disadvantage, you knowing our names while we don't know yours."

"Don't kill me!" All of Margot's anger and hatred had drained away at the sight of Hannibal. She'd wanted to prove herself better and stronger than a lowly omega, but even she knew her place when compared to a thoroughbred alpha hiding a demon inside himself. "Please, don't kill me!"

"That is not the correct answer. I apologize for my abrupt jump to this, but I require you to answers my questions promptly and, you see, I am really rather angry."

Before even Will could think to question, Hannibal had retrieved one of his trusty scalpels and slashed the webbing between her little and ring fingers. Margot's scream echoed around the basement of metal and plastic. Some distant part of Will hated the scream and wanted to stop what would undoubtedly turn into torture, but this beta had conned her way into his home then tried to kill him, his unborn children and his dog; these were unforgivably acts and seeing his alpha intact retribution satisfied some omega trait that wanted to see their alpha prove they could protect. Had it just been Will she'd hurt then maybe things would be different, but he'd not forgive the harm she'd caused Winston and he'd certainly not forgive the danger she'd put his pups in. No, he'd stand there and watch while Hannibal got the answers he wanted then wait for her to appear as some beautiful meal on his plate.

"Kindly tell us your name, please? Is it actually Margot?"

The beta nodded as much as she could with her neck restrained. "Yes. Margot Verger."

Will paled and stumbled back so suddenly that Hannibal had to catch him. Maroon eyes full of concern stared intently at the younger man.

"What is wrong, my sweet Will? Are you in pain?"

"Verger." He muttered. "Verger took me to the House."

Hannibal might have already removed his mask, but even Will hadn't realized there was yet more darkness lurking inside. The alpha grew rigid, his eyes turned almost black and a single eye twitched. After Chilton had died Hannibal had thought his chance to find the House and take revenge on Will's behalf had been dashed, yet another connection had wandered into his home.

With an abrupt speed, Hannibal retrieved a chair from the corner and eased Will into it only to kiss him softly then return to Margot.

"You are going to tell me absolutely everything you know about the House. That includes it's management, it's layout and the best points of entry. You're also going to tell me why you came here. Was it to take Will back?"

"I don't know anything." She insisted but Hannibal could see the lie clear as day.

His head tilted to one side. "Miss Verger, if you're going to lie to me, at least have the decency to be good at it." He slashed her flesh again, this time between her ring and middle fingers. "Truthfully, I abhor torture, I shall admit it is a very useful tool in some instances, but will always be distasteful. It can even have an effect on the meat. However, this is one of those instances where it is a valuable tool. It is in your best interests to answer my questions coherently and without attempts at deception."

It took a few moments of Margot flicking her eyes between Will and Hannibal while screaming pain surged through her right hand. Two cuts, that was all he'd done but she knew it simply the tip of the iceberg. He could rip her lungs out while she still breathed if he felt that way inclined. How had she been so stupid? Mason had always told her she was stupid, maybe he'd been right all along. She'd been so blinded by jealousy and a need to feel strong and have control in her own chaotic life, that she'd ignored the looming death threat that was Hannibal Lecter. Mason was a hammer, a blunt object intent on beating things into submission. Meanwhile, Hannibal was a scalpel, something sharp that could cut away at any obstruction with precision and dexterity. Alphas were terrifying, but this one was something else entirely.

"If I answer your questions, you won't kill me?"

Hannibal flashed her a smile, one of those charming and disarming ones he used on people daily.

"I won't kill you." He agreed which seemed to calm her nerves but confused the omega. "Will, you needn't watch this if you don't want to. You can go rest upstairs with Winston."

Will shook his head and spoke with determination. "No, I want to see this. I want to know why she and Mason happily go around buying and stealing people from their lives."

"That may be so, brangusis. However, as much as I'd like to see you naked and smothered in blood, you will never look at me the same once you see this."

"Do you really think that? Do you honestly think I've not fantasized about seeing this?"

"Reality is always far worse than a fantasy."

Will shook his head. "I could never think different about you, Hannibal. I love you. I want to see my powerful alpha protecting his pups. When I was little I didn't think anybody deserved to suffer but the House taught me otherwise."

This was the moment the darkness in Will began to bloom, down there in the basement petals started to struggle away from one another. Hannibal couldn't wait to see it blossom. Oh how he loved his perfect omega.

"Very well." Wasn't like Hannibal could have refused Will even if he'd wanted to. His attention turned back to Margot. "Please begin, Miss Verger. Did you come to my home intending to kidnap my pregnant mate?"

"… No," she eventually managed to say. "They think he's dead so there wasn't any point."

The House wasn't searching for Will, that was good to know. It had been a brutally cold night back when Hannibal had struck him with the Bentley, so expecting a malnourished, half-dressed omega to have succumbed to exposure somewhere in the woods wasn't much of a stretch. All of that meant that this beta had a personal vendetta.

"Then why attack my mate?"

"He's just an omega! A pathetic, week fucktoy! Why should he get to live happily with a strong alpha and children? Why should he get love and kindness while I get nothing?! I'm a beta, I'm better and stronger than him."

"Yet you're the one strapped to a table and bleeding." Hannibal pointed out.

For centuries the debate over the worth of the three dynamics had argued over. Originally it had only been alphas and betas – the beginning and the end as it were – with the alphas acting as the protectors and providers while omegas were the life-givers. It had been an efficient set-up in the days of cavemen, everybody had their role to play in keeping each other alive and healthy. Betas had appeared later when humanity had begun leaving the caves behind – when bashing someone on the head with a rock hadn't been quite so needed. Yet, even in modern day alphas were considered top of the proverbial food chain despite betas vastly outnumbering them. The air of authority they'd always carried had remained effective. Some alphas had let that blind them into thinking them superior to the other dynamics, but Hannibal knew better; he wasn't better than other dynamics because he'd got alpha blood, he knew all dynamics had a role to play and he'd remembered his role was to protect and provide for the omega who chose to spend their life with him. He might have been superior to other people, but that was due to his intelligence, talents and reputation, not because he'd presented as an alpha. Apparently that wasn't a lesson Margot had ever been taught. No, she'd been educated to believe the dynamic operated under a strict hierarchy where alphas sat at the top while omegas were at the bottom. She'd funnelled that into her own chaotic but comforting belief that, while she may not have been as good as an alpha, at least she wasn't as bad as an omega. Margot likely had very little in her life she could control, very little to make her feel worth something or valued, so seeing Will excel in his new left despite all the horror he'd suffered had infuriated her. She'd wanted to make Will stop existing to remove the reminder that being a beta didn't put her higher up the imaginary ranking. Ultimately, it all boiled down to something very mundane: she'd wanted to kill Will to make herself feel better. 'Pathetic' thought Hannibal, that one act of pettiness had made her worth less than dirt in his eyes. Only by embracing what we are can we overcome our horrors was something she'd never comprehend.

"Where is the House located?"

"I don't know." Hannibal gripped his scalpel tighter which had Margot panic. "I don't! I really don't! I helped my brother get the omegas, but I've only been to the House a few times – just a few – and – and Mason always blindfolded me because he didn't trust me. It's deep in the woods in Wolf Trap, that's all I know. Even when we went to buy him-" She inclined her head to gesture at Will. "- he did that."

Maybe his new chance to locate the House after Chilton's death hadn't been the miracle he'd first assumed. The woodland around Wolf Trap was vast, dense and difficult to navigate, Hannibal had spent an excessive amount of time searching to no avail and even consulted *Google Maps* to search

for abandoned buildings. Either it had been hidden under thick trees or had somehow been removed.

"If you call your brother, will he meet you?"

Margot shook her head. "No. He only – He only finds me when he needs me. I don't know where he is. You could even tell him you'll kill me and he wouldn't come."

Well, that was one plan dashed on the rocks. If this Mason Verger honestly cared so little for his sister that her life being in danger couldn't rouse him into action, then there wouldn't be any using him to gain entry to the House. Margot was turning out to be a wild kind of useless.

"Who runs the House? Will mentioned some kind of master, Jack I believe was his name."

Margot swallowed. "Jack Crawford. He's an alpha. Fairly tall, African American, late forties."

That pain in her hand had really gotten her talking it would seem. 'Good' thought Hannibal, it expedited things if nothing else. Her description hadn't really helped him, Will had already told him what Jack looked like; a last name was useful though.

"How do you acquire new omegas? I assume there is some kind of network for such things. Also, how is the House managed?"

When Margot remained silent just a little too long, Hannibal slashed at the webbing again. Compared to the level of torture he was capable of, three cuts was nothing, but Margot wasn't all that strong physically or mentally.

"Mason knows shady people, always has. Omegas are cattle, if there's money to be made off of them then he'll use them. Jack pays well for pretty ones – more for male ones." Yes, male omegas were somewhat uncommon. "And if Mason keeps the rooms filled then he looks the other way when Mason … does things."

Hannibal didn't need 'does things' explaining. He'd seen the multitude of bruises and old burn scars from cigarettes on Margot's skin. Mason Verger the sadist and savage beast – a man with no decorum and likely little self-control.

"And the management? Surely it's more than just Jack and Mason."

"You really won't kill me?"

"I gave you my word," the alpha affirmed with hardly a pause, all while Will watch on from his chair with his arms wrapped around his growing belly. "And my word is worth far more than those you're used to dealing with."

"… Okay." Margot might have had her doubts, but she'd been backed into a corner and had little other option than to trust Hannibal. "There - There are a few alpha guards outside. Jack doesn't want too many in case they try to take over. They're not allowed inside so they're not tempted by the stock." Stock? Like his darling Will was little more than groceries. "I don't know how many, but the guards inside are all betas and security gates are everywhere. I – I think there are three floors." Crimson blood slowly began to drip down off the table and toward the drain fitted in the floor; a gentle pattering of impending death. "There's a doctor, too. Something with a G."

"Gideon." Will supplied. "I'm not sure he's an actual doctor but he patched us up well enough and gave us the pills."

Apart from providing a surname for the House's master, Margot had yielded little useful information and had proven herself an underachieving little cog; alive but not living. Then again, life was just pending death.

"Thank you, Miss Verger. Although, you've regretfully provided little support in my plans to locate the House. If your brother will not assist me to save your life and you yourself cannot provide an accurate description of the building or its whereabouts, then you have reached the end of your ability to bestow assistance."

Margot's eyes went wide as panic overtook her. "You promised you wouldn't kill me!"

"I am a man of my word, I assure you." He turned to face Will and proffered his scalpel. "This woman helped steal you away from your home and delivered you into the hands of those who would abuse you for their own sexual gratification, Will. She came here to destroy the family we have built together out of petty inferiority and jealousy. I have given my word not to kill her, but that does not mean I will let her live. Perhaps it is time to strike back, Will. Perhaps it is time to let a little of your own darkness out."

Will swallowed as Margot thrashed and fought her bonds having realized the loophole Hannibal had found.

"I don't know."

In an instant Hannibal was crouched at his side with love in his eyes and the scalpel-less hand rested on Will's knee.

"I shan't force you, mylimasis. Self-doubt is a sign of sanity. If you truly do not wish to kill her then I'll leave her down here to starve slowly. I will not have broken my word and she will have been forced to suffer for what she's done. That said, you have a lot of anger built up inside you – understandable anger – and it would be better for you to release it instead of burying it deep down. Buried trauma still hurts and if you show sympathy or mercy you're just being rude to your foe. Anything that numbs the pain becomes addictive, don't let numbing yourself become your addiction."

Blue eyes flicked from baby bump to scalpel then, finally, to Hannibal's eyes. "Is killing your addiction?"

"I wouldn't say it is a compulsion exactly, I don't fight against the urge to kill, but I know I could never give it up forever."

Hannibal's honesty actually surprised Will a moment, he wasn't the sort to let any perceived weaknesses show. Yet the honesty was refreshing for Will who'd spent so many years being lied to. He wanted Jack and Mason dead, there wasn't any refuting that and, now she'd told them her name and Will remembered the night his father had sold him, he wanted Margot dead as well. She'd shown up on his doorstep twice in his life to take everything he held dear, he'd not let there be a third. So, after a calming breath and nod to his alpha, Will took the scalpel and stood. They went to the metal table together where Margot continued to struggle and scream pointlessly. He'd not seen Hannibal kill before and didn't know his preferred method, but as she continued to shout things like 'get away from me you worthless omega', Will just wanted her to shut up. Before he'd even realized

he'd moved, Will had drawn the blade across Margot's throat causing an abrupt end to her shouting. Oh how peaceful quiet was.

Blood bubbled up slowly for a split second before pouring out like a tidal wave, it poured out of her uncontrollably and Will couldn't pull his eyes away. Hannibal's arms snaked around him from behind so he could press his chest to Will's back and plant a kiss just above his mating bite; Will preened. As Margot gagged, choked and bled out before them, the pair snuggled into one another knowing her death bonded them in a totally new way. They weren't just mates or lovers any longer, they were co-conspirators – murder husbands.

"See." Hannibal said quietly, hardly a whisper. "This is all I ever wanted for you. For both of us."

"It's beautiful."

People could scoff at murder and killers all they liked, call it evil or distasteful but everybody was a killer. Maybe they'd not killed a person but everyone had killed something be it a fly buzzing around their face, a suffering dog or a fellow human being, it all boiled down to killing in the end. Humanity as a species was hypocritical and contradictory, but most were too arrogant to admit it and used sophistry to shove different deaths into a diagram of varying severity. Hannibal and Will knew the truth though and were brave enough to acknowledge their darkness without trying to justify themselves. Death was beautiful, each splatter of blood a detailed brush stroke. Death truly was beautiful. People could walk into a Michelin restaurant, order and then comment on how beautiful the plate before them was, all while completely forgetting that something died to put that meat on their plate. All humans were killers, but the two of them refused to look away in shame. Slowly the quiet gargles softened until they finally ended and a once desperate light in Margot's eyes faded, but neither turned away from the art they'd created.

Will set the scalpel down so he could place his bloody hands atop Hannibal's. "You were right. I don't feel a compulsion but I don't think I could give it up now I've experienced it."

Hannibal kissed at that mating bite again. "You are the most wondrous creature I've ever encountered, Will. I adore you, my beautiful and brave omega."

"Alpha."

He could feel Hannibal's interest pressed against him, knew seeing his own mate kill someone had been the single most erotic thing Hannibal had ever witnessed, but Margot had come to destroy and he wanted to see her broken down into nothing but fragments. Her death had been quicker than she deserved, she should have suffered more for threatening their pups.

"My darling William." Hannibal muttered against the shell of Will's ear.

"I want you inside me, but I want to see you butcher her first." Sparkling blue eyes tilted up to Hannibal's maroon ones hopefully. "Please? I want her to stop existing."

They both knew Hannibal could never deny his omega just as well they knew he wasn't a slave to his baser instincts, so Hannibal's nod didn't surprise Will in the slightest.

"If that is what my omega wants then that is what he shall get. Would you like to assist or just watch?"

After confirming he only wanted to watch this time around, Hannibal set to work. He showed Will how to drain the blood and cut into the body to remove organs. Frankly, it reminded Will of before he'd presented when he'd seen his father butcher deer he'd hunted. Organs such as the heart, lungs and liver were set into boxes and refrigerated before he set about turning Margot into a few choice cuts. It hadn't ever occurred to Will that so much of a person was edible, but humans were just another animal and only society made people forget that.

"We'll be eating her for weeks."

"I don't usually have a whole body to break down quite like this. Perhaps I'll make a few special treats for Winston out of her, only right he gets to consume the one who hurt him." Will couldn't argue with that. "She came here to kill you and our pups, now she will sustain the three of you."

"I should regret this. I *killed* someone. My consciousness and empathy should be screaming at me but …" He trailed off.

"But your conscience is clear?" Will nodded as Hannibal helped himself to what would soon be a lovely steak. "That is because you have protected the lives inside you. You have ensured they can never be threatened again. My sweet boy, you will always fiercely protect our pups in a way I cannot ever compare to. It is one thing to sire a child, it is quite another to grow and give birth to one."

"You saying it's a mama bear situation?" Will asked with a chuckle.

"A surprisingly apt description." He returned Will's smile. "Did you know that newborns don't realize they're a separate entity to their birth parent? The concept of being outside the womb is too complex for them to understand. Everything they do is reactional rather than emotional, they feel but don't think. Imagine you go from a constant temperature and dark place you've always known, where all your needs are automatically met, to somewhere loud and bright full of beings you don't recognize, why it sounds terrifying. Logically, I know all of this information, I understand it, but I can never approach our pups in the same way you can. You might know that you're separate from them, but you can also still feel that you're part of them where I can't." The steaks were placed into a tray and slipped into the fridge before Hannibal went to was his hands and equipment. "The idea that omegas are weak is a misguided and woefully idiotic one. Omegas might well be the strongest of us all."

The faith Hannibal had in Will was the only thing that had gotten him through Doctor Lutz's reveal that he carried twins. At six months in, things were progressing quickly and Will had often felt overwhelmed, but with Hannibal as his alpha all would be well. He'd not realized Hannibal thought quite that highly of him though. At first he'd wondered if Hannibal was truly capable of loving anybody but himself and only enjoyed Will's understanding of him because it acted as a mirror. However, as he'd gotten to know Hannibal better he'd seen that, while Hannibal very much did love himself, he was also extremely lonely, isolated and longed for his true self to love and be loved.

Once Hannibal had dried his hands and tools, the basement lights had been shut off so they could return upstairs. Deposing of what remained of Margot Verger could wait.

~X~

As had become an unfortunate habit of late since all the rooms were filled, Mason sat at the House's reception desk with his feet up watching the small, not to mention old, television there. Cordell, one of his most trusted lackeys, leaned against the wall just behind him, a semi-permanent shadow to assist in carrying out his dark urges.

Margot had been missing for almost a week now, though it had taken a few days for Mason to even notice, but the police had finally alerted him to his sister's whereabouts. So there he sat listening to the news report and lamenting the loss of an easily accessible toy.

"*… The woman has been identified as Margot Verger, a beta and most recent victim of the Chesapeake Ripper. Her body was reportedly discovered in the early hours of yesterday morning by a dog walker, and had been eviscerated and posed just as other Ripper victims. Allegedly the body was found with an entire cuckoo's nest placed in the chest cavity. Police and FBI have made no statement indicating further evidence on the Ripper's identity nor why Miss Verger was targeted…*"

Cordell's mouth opened to spit out the usual condolences regardless of whether Mason cared about his sister or not, but Mason was talking before Cordell could get a syllable out.

"My sister was such an amusing little plaything. Her fear tasted delightful. Shame she wasn't an omega, I could have had fun with that. Still, she was stupid and begging for someone to kill her, I just regret it wasn't me. I'd have thought the Chesapeake Ripper would have put a little more effort into who he kills though, Margot couldn't have been much of a fight."

"What do you think is with the bird's nest?"

Mason shrugged. "How should I know, I'm not a bird expert."

There wasn't any question if he'd ever loved his sister, the answer was a resound no. Margot had always been a plaything to him instead of a sister, something to physically and psychologistically abuse as a way to pass the time. Once he'd had her uterus taken to ensure the money their father had left them couldn't ever pass to her via a male heir, she'd been little more than a blank slate he poked at every now and again. Yes, losing Margot had affected him less than a little girl breaking her favorite doll.

The main door opened then admitting a stocky man with thinning dark hair. That shouldn't have been possible, that door shouldn't have opened for anybody without the reception desk buzzing them in unless that person was Jack himself. Mason was on his feet in an instant, television forgotten and trusty gun gripped tightly in his hand.

"Who the fuck are you? How did you get in here?"

"I have a key." The heavyset man smirked. "Tell Jack his business partner wants to have a word."

Realization dawned on Mason then, so this was the mysterious business partner they'd all heard whispers about but never actually seen. Cordell was quickly ordered to go get Jack while Mason put on what he thought was a charming smile and escorted the newcomer into the library – Well, they'd all come to call it the library because of the bookshelf in there, but it was more of a waiting room and gentleman's club for the more brazen visitors to the House. Jack wouldn't like his business partner's arrival, so Mason wanted to hear everything he could.

Chapter 11

In the following two months Hannibal had done as much research as he possibly could on Jack Crawford and Mason Verger but found himself running into dead ends everywhere. Jack had once been a celebrated FBI agent until he'd abruptly shifted sides having gotten tired of working within the confines of the law, he'd been in the wind for years now with no hint of a current location. There was a wife, Bella, but she'd passed from cancer and with her the last connection he had to any sense of morality. As far as Hannibal was concerned morality didn't really exist, just morale. As for Mason, he'd come from a rather wealthy family and been left a surprisingly hefty inheritance, but there was a list of accusations regarding violence and sexual assault on minors the length of Hannibal's arm. His name had popped up in various places for all manner of shady things, but he seemed to be as difficult to pin to a location as Jack. To be perfectly frank, Hannibal had begun wondering if the House had some twisted deity keeping watch over it. Tracking Will back there had failed, Chilton had been killed before he'd gotten his hands on him, Margot had known next to nothing and now both Jack and Mason were essentially ghosts.

The situation had started to grate on Hannibal to the point he'd spent a great many hours in his office brooding over the whole thing. Will hadn't been unaffected by all of this though, he'd chastised himself for not doing more to get the others help. To hear Will talk about it one would assume he'd been a heartless bastard who'd actively chosen to leave them to their fates. What could Will have done though? He'd not been in the outside world since childhood and his story sounded so fantastical that police surely never would have believed him – and if they had it would have been by the ones who frequented the House themselves. Will had just been a teenage omega who knew very little of the world. Hannibal had made a vow though, a vow to find the House, kill the jailers and free Will's friends.

That night Will had wanted to go to bed early because the twins had been fussing all day and finally settled down. Without objection Hannibal had changed into his night clothes and cuddled into his love as the pair had drifted off into slumber while Winston slept at the foot of the bed. After what had happened with Margot a few months earlier, after Winston had done his best to protect Will, Hannibal had given the dog certain privileges as a reward. Instead of sleeping on his big dog bed in the mud room, Winston was now allowed to sleep in it at the foot of the bed at night as long as the bed was put away again in the morning. He'd also been fed the mouthwatering meals Hannibal had made with Margot's body.

Shortly after two in the morning, when the streets were blissfully silent and the room dark, Hannibal had been abruptly woken by a yelp and Will slapping him in the cheek and neck to get his attention. Though blinking sleep from his eyes, Hannibal was alert in seconds and sat bolt upright.

"What is wrong, Will?"

"It's too soon."

He felt it then, so Hannibal pulled back the covers to find Will's waters had broken. Will was only thirty-four weeks, it was too early and outside Hannibal's area of expertise; Will hadn't even started nesting properly.

"Will, how long have you been having contractions?"

"I don't know. I've felt uncomfortable all day, I thought it was just stress or something. I thought – ah! - maybe Braxton-Hicks."

"Why didn't you tell me?" Hannibal demanded more forcefully than he'd intended.

"You've been so busy and I didn't – oh God – didn't want to worry you."

Hannibal hadn't let alarm show on his face, instead he'd been the strong and supportive alpha who'd had his mate to the hospital as swiftly as he was able. Doctors had agreed with Hannibal that the twins were coming and going to be prompt about it, so it hadn't taken long for them to be moved to a delivery room. During the whole labor Will had kept a vice-like grip on Hannibal's hand to ground himself, to remind him everything would be all right. Alpha had whispered sweet nothings in his native Lithuanian while Will had sworn and hissed in his only tongue. Not even a full year ago Will had been a scared nineteen-year-old omega whose whole world consisted of a tiny room, now he had a vast home, dog and loving mate whose pups he was in the process of birthing. Both Hannibal and actual midwives had assured him that, while thirty-four weeks was premature, it wasn't alarmingly so. Of course he'd not shared his theories with the medical staff, but Hannibal had suspected all the stress of the last two months had played a part in the early delivery. He'd not let Will blame himself for it though, so the sweet nothings kept coming.

The moment he heard crying from the first twin, Hannibal kissed Will's sweaty temple with all the love in the world. "You hear that, mylimasis? That's our pup. Just a little more and we'll have the other. I'm so proud of you, Will."

The second twin followed not too far behind the first and Will was finally able to relax after the placenta. Hannibal had pushed Will's damp hair out of his eyes and kissed him lovingly while nurses checked over the twins and tended to Will.

"Congratulations, you have a healthy boy and a girl." Announced the blonde doctor as she removed her gloves and cleaned her hands. "They're a bit premature so we're going to place them in the NICU for a while just to check on their lungs and make sure everything is a-okay. They look healthy though, they're a good size. You can hold them first though."

Will promptly took their daughter from a nurse while another handed their son to Hannibal. Ten fingers, ten toes, their perfect pups. The boy had wisps of Will's dark hair while his little sister clearly had Hannibal's cheekbones.

"They're beautiful." Will cooed while smiling down at their daughter.

"They're ours." Maroon eyes turned back to Will. "I love you. You gave us two perfect pups, my darling omega."

Will blushed a little knowing the nurses were still there witnessing an alpha praise his omega, but he couldn't pull his eyes away from the twins. Names, beyond their son's middle name they'd not come to any conclusions. Will had shown a preference for older classic names while Hannibal's taste leaned towards the more elegant and less common. They'd thought there would be another month to finally make a decision, but it seemed the twins had developed their talent for surprise from their father. Ambushed, the twins had ambushed them.

Over the next few weeks while the twins were in the NICU, Hannibal had obeyed Will's wishes and kept a close eye on them, he'd cancelled all his appointments for the rest of the month so he could rightfully devote his attention to his mate and newborn pups.

With them having actually been born and knowing they had a girl and boy, names had actually been decided really rather quickly; names that Hannibal could see written on their ID bracelets. Those who little tags, one bearing: 'SNAME: Lecter FNAME: Claude Hansel' and the other 'SNAME: Lecter FNAME: Veronique Micsha', was the very first time their names had been written. Hannibal's family tree was ancient and prestigious, he'd never thought he'd get to add his own children to the Lecter family tree, but Claude and Veronique would have their rightful place.

~X~

Jack stood staring out the window of his office at the House thinking about the visit his business partner had shown up with a little over two months ago. A second location of sorts; Marcus Delamare was nothing if not ambitious. The Manor he wanted to call it, a ridiculous name in Jack's book but apparently the whole idea was 'the same as the House but grander'. He'd known Marcus a long time and most of the money to build the House had come from him, so when he'd shown up wanting Jack to use his network and that of Mason's to stock the Manor, he'd not really been able to say no; even if he had been trying to separate the House from Marcus for a decade now. With Mason as Marcus' procurer the place would be filled to capacity in no time – and it gave that insane paedophile something to do that wasn't loitering around the House in the hopes another omega would make an escape attempt. It was Marcus' request to borrow some of Jack's omegas until the Manor had been properly stocked that had left Jack reluctant. He needed all of his omegas, an empty room was a loss of money, but Marcus had made a good point; without him Jack wouldn't have had any omegas in the first place. There were twenty-seven rooms at the House, twenty-seven omegas appealing to numerous types of alpha, though some more popular than others. In the end Jack had agreed to hand over seven of his omegas until Mason got enough to fill the Manor. Six of the less interesting ones and Beverly as an extra punishment for her aiding Will's escape. It had taken Marcus six weeks to get the Manor fit for habitation and Mason to begin rounding up omegas here and there and, when things were ready, Jack would allow the seven loaned omegas to be transferred across state lines.

Word had reached Price and the other beta guards pretty quickly since they'd be the ones tasked with boxing the omegas for transport when the time came, and Price had gone straight to Brian so they knew. Omegas weren't ever transferred out of the House unless they'd died, if Beverly was shipped out of the state then they'd likely never see her again. A loan was what Jack had called it, but who knew if Marcus had any intention on returning the seven. Despite the way Mason made it sound, kidnapping healthy, desirable omegas wasn't an easy nor quick task. Sure, it was alarmingly simpler than it should have been, but these things still took time. How could they possibly hope to protect Beverly when they were just a handful of omegas and a beta who'd all be cut down before they reached the door? Security had cracked down since Will's escape, of course there were still minimal cameras because they needed to protect the identities of their clients, but there were security gates and other guards everywhere. They'd lose Beverly and it would just be another thing Price had failed at.

~X~

With the twins at a healthy weight and a set of strong lungs on the pair of them, they'd been released from the NICU after only a short time and allowed to go home. Not a moment too soon in Will's mind, he'd had more than enough of being poked and prodded, of being apart from his pups. He wanted them at home where they could sleep in the nursery Will had ensured was perfect for them and meet Winston. So, when doctors had finally given them permission to go home, Will had wasted no time dressing and packing up his things. He'd donned a plaid shirt and jeans which probably looked comical beside Hannibal's bespoke suits, but at least Will had felt more human again.

Getting the twins home had been far simpler than Will had imagined thanks to the pair being fast asleep for the whole drive, but Will couldn't help being amused by the Bentley – it had to be the least expected car possible for ferrying around newborn twins. Still, Hannibal adored his Bentley even if he'd not come out and say it and Will assumed his mate would much prefer the twins in his car than Winston. The car seats looked so out of place and Will hadn't gotten a clue when Hannibal had actually bought them, but the twins were soon settled in them safely so they could finally go home.

"Let me take that for you, brangusis." Hannibal insisted once they'd parked and Will didn't object to Hannibal taking his bag with a sweet kiss to his lips. "Can you bring Veronique? I will take Claude."

That was exactly what Hannibal did, Will's bag in one hand with a set of keys and Claude cradled gently in his car seat in the other. Watching him walk up to the house like that did something to Will, to see his dominant alpha with their children made the omega inside him purr.

"You know, Hannibal, I can do stuff." He started as he followed Hannibal into the house with Veronique.

"Of course I know that, Will, yet you are not fully healed and, as your alpha, it is my duty to take care of you. I like caring for you."

That was true, Hannibal took pride providing and tending to the needs and wants of his beloved omega to the point that, in another world, Hannibal could have been Will's doting sugar daddy. They weren't in another world though and Will knew Hannibal's actions came from a place of love.

Being home soothed Will, he'd not been able to nest due to the premature birth and the hospital hadn't had any of the comforting smells of home regardless of how many times Hannibal had coated Will with his scent. The nursery though, that smelt of home and safety. Will set Veronique's car seat down on a table and worked on getting her free of it while Hannibal did the same for Claude; he cooed something Will took to be Lithuanian.

While Will had chosen where all the furniture went and the Persian green for the walls, Hannibal had ensured the room fit in with the aesthetics of the rest of the house. Animal paintings hanging were delicate watercolors Hannibal had commissioned rather than prints and the changing table somehow looked antique even though Will knew for a fact it wasn't. Although, as Will set Veronique down in his crib, he noticed something which hadn't been there when he'd gone into labor.

"Hannibal, what's this?"

With a kiss to their son's forehead, Hannibal set him down in his own crib then went to Will. There, carved into what had once been a plain oval of wood with some carved flowers around it, was

Veronique's name in a delicate calligraphy.

"Ah, yes. I remember you expressed interest in having their names in large letters on either the nursery door or above each of their cribs." Yes, it was something Hannibal had vetoed at lightning speed in order to protect his precious aesthetic. "I thought having their names carved on their cribs would be a suitable compromise. Do you like it?"

Will had to admit that Hannibal's insistence that the nursery was in keeping with the rest of the house had worked out for the better, had Will just slapped paint onto the walls it would have felt like the twins didn't really belong. He looked to Claude's crib to see the carving there and smiled. His alpha hadn't just disregarded his wishes, Hannibal had found a way to incorporate it which was both meaningful and aesthetically pleasing.

Will nodded and cuddled into his alpha's strong chest. "It's perfect. I love you, Hannibal."

"And I will always love you, my darling omega."

A loving kiss was pressed to his temple as Hannibal tightened his hold on Will, then the pair stood for a short time just to watch their pups sleep in their cribs for the first time. The children of a serial killer and a former sex slave, a bizarre combination maybe, but it certainly wasn't boring.

~X~

Three months had passed almost in a flash for Will since the twins had come home, the pups seemed bigger every day and, while he'd read child-rearing books, he'd not expected them to grow so quickly. Hannibal hadn't taken paternity leave but instead had organized his patients in such a way that his afternoons were almost always free to be at home with Will and their children. Will hadn't ever seen his alpha so happy, fatherhood suited him in a way most wouldn't expect from a serial killer. Hannibal's family wasn't a disguise to help hide his true nature, they were beloved parts of his life he would do anything for.

At first Will had been slightly annoyed when Hannibal would swap into Lithuanian with the twins, he'd felt left out, but Will had soon come to realize it was both an unconscious act when he cooed over the pups, and a desire for them to know something of his homeland. After that realization Will hadn't had the heart to be annoyed, instead he'd started to wonder if he should put some effort into learning Lithuanian.

Hardly a year after he'd presented as an omega his father had sold him to the Vergers and Will had been tossed in a tiny room condemned to a dark fate. For years he'd been alone and isolated until Price had come along and secretly let him interact with some of the other omegas. He hated Jack, he'd always hate Jack, the man had stolen so much of his life, but Beverly had given it back. If the House had found out she'd been the one to help him escape – Will didn't want to think of the consequences. Beverly was the reason he had Hannibal and the pups, her bravery had not only given him his life back, but a family for Hannibal. A voice at the back of his mind still chastised him for not doing more to help her, Abigail and the others, but he had faith Hannibal wouldn't rest until the House had been wiped from the face of the earth. His friends were strong, they could endure.

That morning Hannibal had made breakfast as he always did, a protein scramble made with a little extra bacon since it was Will's favorite, then entertained the three-month-old twins so Will could actually finish eating. Their pups were inquisitive and already had a good amount of control over their head and neck movement so often found themselves slowly looking around. The two of them cradled against his strong chest was a sight Will wouldn't ever tire of.

"You should go to work, Hannibal, it would be rude to be late to an appointment." Hannibal glanced up to his mate as Will set down his cutlery and stood to lift Veronique into his arms. "Time to let Papa get some doctoriness done."

Hannibal didn't even bother approaching the so-called word 'doctoriness' and instead followed Will to the play mate coated in little safari animals where they sat the twins down. It didn't fit with anything else in the house – except for maybe Winston's dog bed – but, as long as it was cleared away when not in use, Hannibal had no issue with it.

"I should be home by four o'clock, call me if you need anything." He said before kissing each of the twin's foreheads in turn. "Papa loves you."

Will snuggled into his chest then, the rich scent of alpha an ever comforting one that Will hadn't though was real until he'd met Hannibal. They shared a kiss of love and devotion, then Hannibal slipped off to work leaving Will alone with the pups and a napping Winston. He sat beside the twins on their little mat smiling down at them, he'd been terrified when they'd first found out they'd be twins, but Will couldn't ever be without them now. Didn't matter how old they got, how tall or even when they had children of their own, Will had given birth to them so they'd forever be his babies.

"Daddy loves you just as much as Papa does."

It had been Will who'd chosen the daddy and papa bit, he'd thought the simple distinction between their two fathers would be simpler for the twins as they grew and papa suited Hannibal rather nicely.

~X~

Three patients were scheduled for that morning, two he'd been seeing for several months and a first-timer. The first two had been together while the newcomer was later in the day. That was how Hannibal had ended up busying himself with a drawing of the twins while he waited for his last patient of the day. It wasn't anywhere near finished, needed shading properly and real depth put into Claude's eyes, but it had been quite some time since Hannibal had truly devoted himself to an artistic endeavor and one he'd missed. Perhaps when finished he'd frame it and gift the drawing to Will.

He checked his watch, the appointment officially started in four minutes so his patient would surely be out in the waiting area by now unless they were the rude sort – he hoped not. James Cash was a beta who'd contacted him a few days earlier hoping to organize an appointment. Apparently he'd found Hannibal by reputation and needed to get some things off his chest, the man had sounded nervous and laughed a lot as a coping strategy to the point curiosity had gotten the better of Hannibal.

The drawing was left on his desk as Hannibal crossed the room to open the door leading to the waiting area. Sure enough a silver-haired beta was there absent-mindedly fidgeting with his hands.

"Hello, Mister Cash. Please, come in."

With a nod of thanks the beta entered and hung up his coat. Hannibal wasn't cheep, his services couldn't be afforded by everybody and, judging by the beta's clothing, he probably should have fallen into that category. 'What would make him spend what is, to him, a small fortune to speak to me instead of a cheaper psychiatrist?' Hannibal wondered to himself as he closed the door and the pair took their seats.

"Thanks for seeing me. I – I know my call was out of the blue."

"Not at all, Mister Cash, my job is to help you. You needed help so you called, there is nothing in that which requires thanks." He crossed his legs and looked over this nervous beta. "Might I ask why you selected me to be your therapist?"

"You're far away from where I live and work, your office is private and I thought … maybe my problems wouldn't see me here."

That was a very strange way to phrase something but Hannibal didn't comment on it, not yet at least. Traditionally Hannibal used a few probing questions on new patients, but this one seemed different from those he normally saw and Hannibal chose to take the direct approach while still sounding causal.

"Tell me why you are here, Mister Cash."

"It's silly, but I think stress is getting to a point where it's actually killing me."

Yes, one could see that just by looking at him, the beta had dark circles around his eyes and, while clean and freshly shaved, he still looked somewhat scruffy; he also smelt oddly of the woods.

"Have you experienced any weight loss or a lack an appetite?"

The silver-haired beta nodded as he shuffled in his chair. "Both."

Something was eating at this man but he didn't seem inclined to share even though that was why he'd made the appointment in the first place. Most patients knew they needed to talk about their problems but were reluctant due to how vulnerable it would leave them, but Mister Cash acted more like he didn't want to drag Hannibal into something.

"Where does this stress come from? If you chose me because I am some distance from where you usually frequent, perhaps it is your occupation. What is it you do for a living, Mister Cash?"

That had the beta swallow and look down as he wiped a hand down his face. Hannibal was right on the money. The second his occupation had been mentioned Mister Cash had begun displaying self-soothing motions and avoided eye-contact as a way to shield himself from the question.

"Nothing good or noble." He practically whispered. "Not like psychiatry."

So Mister Cash was ashamed of himself and what he did for a living. Suddenly his problems seeing him made much more sense, if he was part of something illegal he'd not want his employers to

know he'd come to see a therapist and he'd feel a need to protect Hannibal from suffering consequences if they did.

"Anything you say to me will remain strictly between the two of us, Mister Cash. I am not here to judge you or too lecture you, I am merely here to listen and offer advice."

Oh he'd judge, Hannibal couldn't help himself, but at least he'd do it quietly inside his own mind. Mister Cash mulled Hannibal's words over for a few moments before he finally responded just as Hannibal had known he would.

"The man I work for – he's a monster. I didn't really have a choice about working for him either. My dad had debts, you see, big ones that became mine when he died."

"So you work for this man as a way to pay off your father's debts?"

Mister Cash nodded. "I can't run, I can't tell anyone and I hate what they do to the omegas."

That had Hannibal lift an eyebrow. "Omegas?"

The beta shot to his feet then and made to grab his coat and leave. "I'm sorry, Doctor Lecter, I shouldn't have come here. I'm so sorry for wasting your time."

James Cash: A silver-haired beta who worked for shady people some distance from Hannibal's office, who was being eaten alive by guilt, smelt of the woods and knew something about abused omegas. James Cash. James Cash – No, it couldn't be that obvious.

"Are you Jimmy Price?" The beta's hand stilled on the door handle as he slowly looked over his shoulder to Hannibal who'd not moved an inch. "You work at the House."

Price's mouth fluttered before words tumbled out. "How do you know that? I spent so long making sure you weren't a client."

Hannibal's nose wrinkled distastefully. "I am assuredly not a client of that deplorable place. Being afraid of the House and Jack makes your nervousness much more logical. Drink?" In a nonchalant manner Hannibal walked to a decanter behind his desk and poured glasses of 75-year-old whiskey for them both. "A little early in the day perhaps, but I suspect the situation calls for some liquid courage."

Price lingered on the edge of staying and running away, but Hannibal didn't seem like the alphas he normally met and that drink called to him. Decision made, Price hung up his coat again and accepted the whiskey from Hannibal.

"You needn't fear anything from me, Mister Price, I have no intention of informing on you to Jack Crawford. He is an enemy we have in common. Sit."

Price obeyed and retook his seat much as Hannibal did. How Hannibal knew Jack's name or that the House even existed was a mystery since Hannibal didn't look like the sort to be caught dead in an illegal brothel as seedy and unrefined as the House.

"If you're not a client, how do you know my name?"

Hannibal sipped his whiskey. "We have a mutual friend who has mentioned you before. Also, when you smell so strongly of the woods and mentioned omegas, I thought it would be worth testing my

hypothesis. James Cash might have been a little too akin to a sore thumb, don't you think?"

"Guess I gave myself away. Who's our mutual friend?"

Normally Hannibal liked to hold his cards as close to his chest as possible and only play them when the moment was right, but Will had trusted Price so Hannibal chose to as well.

"Will Graham."

"*What?!*" Price practically spat out his drink. Rude, but Hannibal would forgive him this once. "Will's alive?"

"That is correct, Will is very much alive and well. He is thriving. I have taken him as my mate." The sudden dubious expression on the beta's face wasn't lost on Hannibal. "I discovered him the night he escaped running through Wolf Trap, I took him home and protected him. Over time he became my mate quite freely. I would never pressure the man I love into anything he did not want."

Price sat unmoving for a moment and then took a deep breath. "He deserves to be happy."

Yes, Will most certainly deserved to live the rest of his life happy and wanting for nothing, something Hannibal was perfectly content to ensure happened.

"He is happy, I assure you."

"Can I see him? Please?"

"How about we make a deal, Mister Price?"

"Jimmy is fine, nobody calls me Mister Price."

"Jimmy then." Hannibal acquiesced. "I shall allow you to be reunited with my dear William if you assist me in tearing down the House and Jack Crawford. I would very much like to eliminate the place and people who caused Will to suffer so dreadfully, and I suspect you would like the same. Will's dearest wish is for his fellow omegas there to regain their lives as he has."

Price looked hesitant, his brow furrowed as he gripped his glass tight. "You're just one alpha."

"I am just nothing, Jimmy. While I find boasting to be distasteful, I shall admit I am a thoroughbred alpha and therefore stronger than the vast majority of alphas. I can handle everything else, I simply need someone on the inside to open the door."

"You can really get the omegas out? You can get Brian out?"

"Who is Brian?"

Price knocked back what was left of his drink the quickly started to fidget with the glass. "He's one of the omegas but … I love him. *We're* in love. I know I'm just a beta but he loves me anyway."

"You have my word, Jimmy. I will put an end to the House and Brian will be free to be with you."

Price's mind floated off to thoughts of Brian and Alana, how he'd been the cause of Alana's kidnapping. Maybe it wasn't wise to trust an alpha he'd only just met, but Price didn't really have a better option nor could things be allowed to continue the way they were.

"Okay," said the silver-haired beta eventually. "You have yourself a deal, Doctor Lecter." Pleased, Hannibal extended his hand to shake Price's firmly. "It needs to be done soon though. Jack is transferring seven of the omegas out of state and Beverly is one of them."

Beverly was another name Will had mentioned more than once. She'd been the brave one who'd stolen the key so Will could escape in the first place. He couldn't allow Beverly to be dammed, something like that would have broken Will's soul, so they'd move quickly to watch the House burn.

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

Trigger Warnings for sexual abuse, sadism and torture in the first section,

The clock outside Alana's room had struck noon ten minutes ago and she knew what that meant. Every other Tuesday at 12:15 exactly Charles Panzram would march into her room to inflict his savagery upon her. According to Price, Panzram had been a regular at the House since long before he'd been dragged into working there and hopped between victims. He never fucked them, just inflicted as much pain as possible in the time he'd paid for and satisfied himself that way. After experiencing it every other week, Alana had started to think a lot of his rage boiled down to impotence but she'd never risk saying the word aloud.

She closed her eyes and took a calming breath as her last few minutes waned in an attempt to mentally prepare herself. How Beverly and Brian had endured this evil for years but retained a sense of humor and ability to hope, Alana didn't know. Then there was Abigail, the girl had only just turned fourteen and been there since she'd presented.

Heavy footsteps jolted her out of her thoughts then, only Panzram walked that loudly. She'd been strong once, she'd stood up for other omegas and encouraged them to make something of their lives. Omegas had made great strides in the last hundred years, they could vote and have real careers, but people like Charles Panzram saw omegas as nothing but a toy, something less than human. Instead of standing up for herself now she cowered and prayed he'd lost interest in her. Of course he'd not lost interest, those heavy footsteps stopped outside her door and one of the beta guards let the sadistic alpha inside. In his hand was his trademark case, the box of savagery he wasn't ever without.

Alana squeezed her eyes shut as though it would somehow shield her, but Panzram busted right through her childish defences with a violent slap to her face, a slap so hard Alana honestly thought she'd lost a tooth for a second.

"Open your eyes." He commanded with a hiss of venom and no room for argument. When they instinctively screwed up tighter, he slammed her head into the wall beside her bed with such force Beverly likely heard it through the wall. "Open your fuckin' eyes!"

They did so just in time to see him grab her by the ankles and haul her flat on the bed then flip her over onto her stomach. He chuckled at the way she coughed from the air being forced from her lungs. Panzram sat on her back so he could open his case and fish about inside; things popped that shouldn't have, pain surged up her spine into her skull and breathing grew increasingly difficult like breathing through a wet cloth.

"That's a good little bitch." He mused as he pulled out a length of old rope from the case. Rope. He could have used handcuffs or any number of other things but Panzram always tied her to the bed by her wrists and ankles with that accursed rope just to see the burns form, to enjoy the way it ripped

into any flesh it found. "Hope you been practising them screams for me. You always make the best ones."

Bound and at the mercy of a man incapable of mercy, Alana could do nothing to stop her attacker yanking her panties down and shoving up the pink tank top she wore. Totally exposed to him, she could do little but wait. He'd taken any chance she had to fight and begging was exactly what he wanted to hear. Alana had spent the majority of her life proving that being an omega didn't make her incapable, then Mason had stolen her from her home and alphas like Panzram had forced her to be a victim. 'Maybe omegas are weak after all' her mind pondered sorrowfully.

From that damn case came a riding crop of black and blue, new and clearly bought specifically with Alana in mind. She'd not seen it, had her face buried in the mattress, but she could hear the swishes of air from his practice swings; a taunt for what was to come. He abruptly stood then, the release of pressure on her back almost more painful than when he'd first sat. Alana wheezed and gasped, air burning her lungs despite how much she needed it; a cruel mercy. Before the pain in her lungs or back could even begin to think of easing, that riding crop came down on Alana's pale legs with a snap that echoed sadistically off the walls. She yelped as tears began to well in her eyes. Delighted by the red welt, Panzram struck her again and again and again on her thighs until those tears fell and screams were muffled by nothing but the mattress.

"Say you like it!" He ordered with another blow, this time to that sensitive place between her legs. "Admit it, whore! Say it!"

She didn't! She didn't like it, she didn't want it, she didn't *consent* to it. Panzram couldn't have cared less though, for he couldn't have cared less if Alana did enjoy the abuse or not, he simply wanted to control her in every way he could. When Alana bit her tongue and tried to retain some semblance of control over her own thoughts and feelings, Panzram grabbed her by her hair and yanked her head back so far that her spine arched into a painful crescent off the bed; rope dug into her wrists with an even more brutal bite.

"I-"

"All omegas are disgustin' lil bitches. I'm gettin' you off! You should be fuckin' thankin' me! Admit you want it!"

Refusing was pointless, it would only make the torture worse, so Alana gave in knowing she truly had no control over her own life any longer.

"I like -" The riding crop came down again causing her to scream. "I like it. D- do it again."

"Try bein' fuckin' polite!"

Alana sobbed through the pain; back, thighs, backside and most intimate place bruised by his spite and violence. She tried to tell him what he wanted to hear, stopped worrying about retaining a right to herself and instead focused on getting through it as quickly as possible. Eventually something inside Alana drifted away into a numbness, she knew what was happening but no longer felt part of it, her mind dissociated as a last-ditch effort to protect her. Repeatedly she told him she enjoyed what he was doing, an action made by auto-pilot while Alana's consciousness drifted away as best it could.

~X~

Gathered in Hannibal's study in the early hours of the morning were Price and the alpha himself. They'd been meeting sporadically over the last couple of days to prepare as best they could for infiltrating the House. There wouldn't be any sirens or police, everything would be down to the them themselves. Hannibal would do what had to be done – Price preferred not to get any more details on that – while he and Barney would manage everything on the inside. Other than them and the omegas, everyone was fair game to Hannibal. Though he knew he was helping to plan the deaths of numerous people, the alphas were all savages and the beta guards were all as bad as Gideon; they just wanted paying and spared no real thought to the omegas even if they didn't actively harm them.

"The main door has a buzzer and can only be opened from the reception desk which is *always* manned. Us guards used to have keys to open it but after Will escaped only Jack has a master key. My keys open the rooms on the floor I'm responsible for and the security gates on the stairs. I can't get into the basement where Gideon's so-called doctor's office is or up to Jack's office. With Mason and Cordell gone it's easier to get to the reception desk without looking suspicious but it won't be easy. There's no other way in, the House is like a fortress."

"Getting me into the building is the main thing. I'll have to deal with the alphas outside first so you just go about your routine as usual until I've finished."

The study door opened then and Will entered looking tired and mildly annoyed. Hannibal instantly showed concern by taking Will into his arms and kissing him softly while Price kept his eyes on the map he'd managed to make.

"Is something wrong, Will?"

"Don't suppose you moved Buckley or know where he is?" Buckley was the stag toy Will had bought for Claude shortly after they'd brought the pups home, a toy Claude had rather taken to. "Claude is demanding him and is crying because I can't find him."

Hannibal shook his head. "I'm sorry, Will, I've not seen the stag. Have you tried the living room? Is Claude all right?"

"He's fine, just loud."

"Well, that is most rude."

Will breathed out a laugh. "I told him that but he doesn't seem to realize it's one of Papa's no-nos just yet. I'll look in the living room, maybe Winston wandered off with it again. I love you." They shared a kiss then Will made for the door. "Sorry to interrupt, Jimmy."

Hannibal watched the door close before he turned his attention back to Price and the things set out on his desk.

"I still can't get over how grown up he looks now, or that you have *twins*. I mean, I remember him staring off at walls blankly, and now he's so animated and happy. I want Brian to be like that."

"The sooner we complete our plans, the sooner you can help him heal."

That got a nod from the beta, they were running out of time after all. Price saw how dangerous Hannibal really was, but Will trusted him whole-heartedly so he would as well.

"This library you have listed on your map," began Hannibal with a gesture. Sure, the map was nothing compared to anything Hannibal would have drawn, but Price had done his best and it was more than Hannibal had before. "Are there any cameras in there?"

"None. The cameras are only in the stairwell and they're purposely placed just to keep track of how many people are on which floor. If there were cameras recording everybody's face Jack would have gone out of business years ago. Security may look light to the casual observer, but it's a hierarchy; the betas keep the omegas in and the alphas keep the betas from getting any ideas, then Jack sits at the top making no secret of the fact he'll kill anyone who puts a foot out of line."

"And Mason Verger?"

"He's been away collecting new omegas for Jack's business partner, he has been randomly popping in though. I think it's to remind us none of us are safe. Barney says he'll cover the cameras, he takes food around to some of the other guards sometimes so it shouldn't be too hard to convince whoever is on the cameras to take a break."

"How many beta guards are there?"

"Including me and Barney, I'd say about twenty-five. Most of those are on the main floor, the rest rotate. Gideon doesn't often leave his basement but he's a violent one when he wants to be.

Hannibal nodded. "Where is the power generator?"

"In the basement behind a locked gate only Jack and Gideon have keys to. In my opinion it's a waste of time trying to shut that down."

"I agree, it would also alert all the guards. If your friend is watching the cameras then we can remain undetected longer. I simply wished to know if they could use a power cut to attempt trapping me."

"With the way the security gates are set up, cutting the power would probably trap them as much as you."

Hannibal hummed and collected all the notes and map into a neat stack which he slipped into his desk drawer before he turned to a slightly confused Price.

"It's time you returned home and got some sleep, Jimmy. You are clearly tired and need to be well-rested for what we are going to do. Should harm come to you Will would never forgive me. I must also check on my pups." He gestured to the study door. "I'll escort you out."

"That's the nicest dismissal I've ever had." Price chuckled. "Are you sure we shouldn't talk about this more?"

Hannibal didn't slow his movements through the house as he led Price to the front door. "Not tonight. You need rest as I said and it is quite a drive home still."

With a nod, Price obeyed and left to find his own bed while Hannibal locked the front door, turned off all the lights and made his way upstairs to see if the stag had been found.

Chapter 13

While Hannibal prided himself on his mental fortitude, even he reached a point where stumbling home for some peace and quiet was the only desired option. Albert Stanley was one of his more unstable patients who had an unwavering belief that ants had turned him into a living nest, while psychologically fascinating, the man did have a tendency to go on and on about ant facts if left unchecked. By the end of their appointment all Hannibal had wanted was to drive home to his adored mate and their twins, so that was exactly what he did.

The evenings had started to grow warm and trees had begun to blossom leaving a faint sweet scent in the air that Hannibal had always enjoyed. It was entering his home and climbing the stairs to his bedroom that Hannibal enjoyed more though because he knew he'd find his family there. Sure enough Will was sat cross-legged with his back to the door with the twins laying on the bed as they listened to the story Will told them. Claude had rolled onto his stomach while Veronique swung her zebra toy in her arm. The zebra had been bought at the same time as Buckley and named Barcode of all things by Will – a ridiculous name if one asked Hannibal but Will hadn't been dissuaded.

"Look you two, Papa's home."

"And how are our pups this evening?" Hannibal asked as he came to a stop at the foot of the bed so he could kiss the top of Will's head. "Well behaved I hope."

"They're Lecters, they learned their lesson about being rude the first time and won't succumb to poor manners again." Will teased as he closed the book and set it aside.

"That's what I like to hear."

Will grabbed his wrist then to pull his attention entirely to himself instead of the twins. "I need to tell you something." Hannibal cocked his head questioningly. "I think I'm going into heat again."

Quickly but not too eagerly, Hannibal knelt on the bed and breathed his omega in before kissing his mating bite. Will practically melted, always did when Hannibal gave his bite attention.

"Indeed you are." Another kiss to his lips this time before Hannibal pulled away enough to cradle Will's face. "The twins are four months old now, the drugs given to you by Gideon are well and truly out of your system as is much stress. It's no surprise you're heat has come. We shan't be as surprised by it this time though and it is still very early, proper heat won't strike for over a week yet."

"I'm always amazed how much you can smell." Will volunteered as he clambered into Hannibal's lap and snaked his arms around the older man's neck. "We should practice. You know, for when I do go into heat again."

"Is that so?" Hannibal smirked. "I really should make dinner."

"I can think of something else to put in my mouth."

"Can you now? Well, if my culinary expertise aren't required, I must clearly satisfy you another way."

Hannibal extracted himself from Will and the two made quick work of settling the sleepy twins down in their cribs. As soon as they were settled and the lights were off, Hannibal lifted his mate over his shoulder in a fireman hold and returned to the bedroom where Will was promptly thrown down on the bed with a bounce that had Will smiling. They shed each other of their clothes with a rapidly growing desire and Will soon had his mouth filled just as he'd wanted. The scent of his alpha coated him, ensnared him, permeated his lungs. Hannibal's hand cradling the back of his head as he began to slowly thrust into Will's mouth had him flush and mew. Something which had once brought nothing save for disgust and trauma now filled Will with delight, he'd not been overpowered and forced by some weak alpha who couldn't get an omega to genuinely want them even in their most delirious heats, this was Will's alpha, his Hannibal who spoilt and adored him, who loved and cherished him, who'd given him a life and self-confidence again.

Only when Hannibal lingered on the very edge of orgasm did he pull out of Will's mouth and away from that talented tongue with a groan. Hungry for more, Will pulled himself up his mate's toned body – while Hannibal hadn't bothered developing muscles for show, there wasn't any denying the strength inside his body; his arms were firm and his chest solid. Will straddled Hannibal with his hands planted on that solid chest as Hannibal's instinctively went to settle on Will's slender hips.

"You enjoy riding me, don't you, my darling William."

It wasn't really a question, more of a passing observation but it still had Will grin as he leaned down to kiss his mate. Will's glasses had been shed at the same time as his clothes and Hannibal didn't think he'd ever get over just how young Will appeared without them. Twenty, his stunning omega was twenty now and yet could still pass for seventeen without his glasses. Will's birthday had been a small affair of little fuss, Will had wanted it that way and Hannibal knew throwing a grand party attended by people he didn't know would have just made Will hate his birthday all the more. So it had been a lazy day of presents and chocolate cake Hannibal had sculpted little Winstons for, at least it had been until he'd taken Will fishing. Hannibal had sat by the shore sketching while Will had delighted in something he'd not been free to do since childhood. Such a delightful omega, and he belonged to Hannibal entirely.

"Need you, alpha."

Desperation had started to drift into Will's voice which had the animalistic part of Hannibal's brain growl wantonly. While it was less common for omegas to conceive outside of their heats, it was still a possibility, one Hannibal would deal with later.

Already slick was Will when fingers began to tease him, slowly at first just to hear the delectable sounds Will made, but soon with more desire and passion. Skin flushed as fingers tried to resist clawing at Hannibal's chest hair.

"Please. Please, I need it."

Hannibal smirked, a twinkle in those murderous eyes. He entered Will as their lips locked for a deep kiss, the feeling of being so wonderfully full one Will reveled in. Hannibal's large hands pulled Will down to meet his own, sinking him deeper into the needy omega. Thrusts grew rapid, Hannibal pounded into Will's slender body with such force the boy bounced atop him causing chestnut curls to flutter around his flushed face; an etherial sight if ever there'd been one.

Pants filled the room, breathy groans and desperate moans of Hannibal's name as blue eyes slipped shut and Will's head fell back. Will came then with another shout of his alpha's name, sterile seed coated Hannibal's stomach but he didn't relent, kept thrusting into his mate in search of his own

orgasm and a need to watch Will come undone on top of him as many times as was possible. Without a hint of warning – probably why he was so good at catching people off-guard – Hannibal

flipped them on the bed and forced Will's knees up to provide him deeper access to that heavenly place between Will's legs. Will had already come untouched once, Hannibal wanted to see it again and didn't care if he had to destroy the mattress to do it. The new rhythm he set was brutal and had Will begging in hardly a moment, what he begged for wasn't exactly clear but Hannibal didn't care for a specific answer. Will clawed at Hannibal to keep him close, to keep the kisses coming and have him hit that sensitive place deep inside him. His erection had stirred again but when Will slipped a hand down it was swiftly batted away; Hannibal wanted his omega to cum from nothing but the feeling of being filled by his alpha, and Will couldn't bring himself to argue.

"Hannibal!" Will shouted as a second orgasm hurtled through him.

This time Will's walls tightened around Hannibal like a vice and finally had him spill inside Will with a grunted something in Lithuanian which Will thought may have been a swear. The normally pristine and eloquent Hannibal Lecter swearing and sweaty above him, it was a gift only Will would ever receive.

After a few seconds, Hannibal fell onto his back and pulled Will into his chest as they each sucked in sex-scented air. Sticky, breathless and coated in sweat – they didn't care. Nothing was said for a very long time since nothing needed to be, they just lay there in one another's arms until they'd gotten their breath back and the slow drying of cum started to grow irritating – seemed they did care.

"I love you, Hannibal."

"I know, and I love you."

The mates finally got up to clean themselves up, then Hannibal went to check on the children before he returned to the bedroom knowing Winston, who'd been napping next to Veronique's crib, would watch over them.

Slipping into bed with Will wasn't something Hannibal would ever tire of, he'd never had an issue sleeping alone but there wasn't anything like cradling his mate in his arms as they slept. Will snuggled into Hannibal's hairy chest knowing it wouldn't be long before slumber took him.

"Hannibal?" Will's voice sounded so loud in such a silent room. "When I go into heat will we have another pup?"

"It's a possibility, mylimasis, that is what your heats are for after all. However, I suspect it might be best to put you on birth control now suppressants are entirely out of your system and you're healthy. Especially with the twins having been premature. There is no rush for us to have more pups, we don't have to ever have more if they are not something you desire."

"Good." Will nodded into Hannibal's chest. "I thought telling you I didn't want more pups yet would make me a bad omega."

The alpha pulled Will closer, squeezed him comfortingly and kissed the top of his head.

"You could never be a bad omega, my darling boy, you are perfect in every way. Wanting to forgo more pups so you can focus on our twins and your own healing doesn't make you a bad omega, it

makes you an intelligent and loving one."

Will didn't respond, just lay there until he fell asleep still cradled in Hannibal's strong embrace.

~X~

Hannibal sat in his usual chair at the office with that unreadable expression of his while Albert Stanley scratched away at his forearms mumbled about ants. Rain splattered softly against the large windows like some kind of strange musically accompaniment to the mumblings before night started to descend. Outside might have been chilly, but Hannibal's office had been filled with a warm and cosy air that could almost leave one sleepy. Hannibal preferred the night; many feared the dark but he'd never felt the same. Then again, people weren't scared of the dark itself, that was a misconception, it was what could be lurking inside the darkness that most innately feared. Hannibal couldn't ever fear such a thing for he was what lurked in the darkness.

Albert wasn't all that memorable, a skinny thing best described by the word average and only the word average. Save for his conviction he'd been turned into a living ant nest, there really wasn't a single remarkable thing about him - or so Hannibal had thought. That late afternoon Albert had chosen to shove his sleeves up crookedly above his elbows to scratch at where the ants were apparently rooting around inside him. That was when Hannibal saw the beta's wounds, numerous scars and cuts from where he'd tried to cut the ants out alongside circular burn marks. Of course Hannibal knew there had been past attempts to rid Albert of the imaginary ants, but he'd seemed to have been making slow progress; the newness of the marks indicated that had officially come to an end. Albert hadn't responded to a direct approach, always had a counter for logical reasoning, but Hannibal had endured enough of the softly-softly approach, it was time to shove something so simple and undeniable in his face that it either shocked Albert into wanting to make an effort in his own progress, or gave Hannibal an excuse to refer the irritating man to somebody else.

Hannibal cut into the mutterings with that deep voice of his which caused Albert's eyes to snap up to the older man.

"There is nothing under your skin, Mister Stanley."

"There is! You can see it."

"No, I cannot. You are diabetic, correct?" Albert nodded. "And the majority of these itches and tingles you believe to be ants originate in your feet and hands?" Another nod. "Then I have come to the conclusion that you likely have a disorder called peripheral neuropathy, this would explain the numbness and tingling you feel as well as the burning and stabbing pains you liken to ant bites. I've also observed you be rather unstable in terms of balance. While you're brain's desire to assume you've been hollowed out and converted into an ant colony is something we must continue to discuss, it is my professional opinion that you consult a medical doctor as soon as you can."

"How would you know about per- perhif-"

"Peripheral neuropathy," he corrected. "I spent a great many years as a surgeon before moving into psychiatry and still hold a license to practice."

"Nah." Albert shook his head. "I can *feel* them wriggling around in there. They got in me when I was a kid! When those other kids beat me up and tossed me in that ditch."

Hannibal nodded. "That incident was traumatic for you, to be attacked by peers and left like little more than garbage, and the ants crawling on you was a second layer of trauma. Added insult to injury as it were. This disorder can lead to serious medical complications to your body, Mister Stanley, I am amazed it hasn't done so already. I understand you are disinclined to believe your troubles can be assigned a box so easily, but I am here to help you. The only question now is: are you willing to let me?"

"Help me? You just told me to go to another doctor. You're fobbing me off." Well, that wasn't a term Hannibal heard often. "I pay you to believe me and you just throw some fancy term at me and shove me away."

"You pay me to help you work through traumas and evolve your way of thinking, not to believe you, Mister Stanley. Yes-men do little good in the long run. I have no intention of pushing you away or having another doctor take over your treatment. What I'm saying is that you may well have a condition and that a thorough medical examination should be performed. Peripheral neuropathy can be dangerous if left untreated. I won't shove you away, Mister Stanley, I am here as long as you need me."

The rest of their time was mostly consumed by Hannibal pushing Albert to do as he was told in the most gentle way possible. The softly-softly approach worked best with him even if it had started to grate on Hannibal. By the time Albert had left the office, he'd reluctantly agreed to make an appointment with a doctor Hannibal had specifically recommended, though Hannibal wasn't entirely convinced Albert would actually make it to his appointment. Still, that turned out to be a problem for a different day as hardly five minutes after he'd left, Price stormed into Hannibal's office looking flushed and panicked.

"You have to do it tonight!" Hannibal lifted an eyebrow at the beta who'd so rudely barged in. "It has to be now. I'm sorry, I know it's dangerous to storm in with how paranoid Jack is, but this is urgent."

"I accept your apology, Jimmy. Now, please tell me what has you so agitated."

Jimmy began to pace before Hannibal's desk. "You remember Jack was planning to send Beverly away?"

"Indeed, I do. It is something we've spoken about at length. I assume that Jack has finally begun actively transporting the omegas?"

"Yeah, they're going to be moved by Mason at 8am tomorrow morning. But- but-" Price came to a dead stop before the desk with desperation in his eyes. "It's worse though. Jack's decided Brian is going too. Please, Doctor Lecter, *please* don't let them take Brian away. What if it was Will?"

"There's no need to convince me, Jimmy, I had planned to move in the next few days anyway."

The animalistic voice in the back of his head screamed and roared, wanted to make it disturbingly clear he'd never let his sweet omega be put in such danger, but Hannibal calmed his mind.

"So you'll do it tonight?"

Hannibal nodded. "Yes. Tell your friends to be prepared. We will stick to our original plan and carry it out just as intended. The first step in that is for you to go about your routine like nothing is unusual."

"I – I can do that." Price seemed calmed after Hannibal's assurances, he visibly relaxed and quit shuffling from foot to foot. "Okay, I'll just act normal."

With that the timeline had been pushed forward and Hannibal knew things wouldn't ever be the same for Will after this. The omega needed his friends free from the House while Hannibal just wanted to see it all torn down. Knowing the House was gone would be life changing thing for Will, it would allow him to gradually stop fearing what lurked in the darkness and concentrate on his own emotional healing.

~X~

A echoing buzz sounded, bounced off the green walls of the House until Price was finally allowed into the reception area where he found Gideon and a beta known only as Trip chuckling with one another. Trip had always reminded Price of a less volatile Mason Verger, he seemed to delight in seeing people suffer and enjoyed Gideon's little medical quips. Price tried not to think about what was to come, surely they'd all be killed by a thoroughbred before dawn.

"Where is Barney?" He asked once the door had slammed shut behind him.

Gideon shrugged. "Not a clue, maybe he's playing orderly to the livestock again."

Frankly, Gideon shouldn't even have been there, he wasn't a guard, his place was in the basement like the skulking rat he really was. Price didn't linger longer though, just went in search of Barney who he managed to corner coming out of what the guards had long been using as a locker room of sorts. After ensuring nobody was around to spy on them, Price told Barney about the change in the timeline and to be prepared for later that evening.

"Is Mason going to be here?"

Barney nodded as he responded with a hushed tone. "Yeah, he's been coming in and out for the last few hours. Says he's getting things ready, whatever that means."

That was good. Taking Mason out of the world was one of the primary objectives of their whole plan. He couldn't have been allowed to live, was too evil and such a danger to those around him.

With Barney informed and mentally preparing himself, Price quietly headed upstairs to tell Brian and the others. They'd planned it so carefully; Jimmy Price and Hannibal Lecter were unlikely co-conspirators, but that was what made their deceptions easier. Jack thought Price and his other betas too stupid and cowardly to try anything and, of course, had no idea about the serial killer gunning for him.

~X~

Down the stairs padded Will once the twins were comfortably sleep for the night only to ground to an abrupt halt when he came face to face with Hannibal. He stood by the front door with a black carryall at his feet and dressed head to toe in black. Of course Hannibal had told Will what was happening the moment he'd returned home, but the sight of Hannibal ready for the systematic slaughter of those who'd spent years profiting off him had struck Will with a feeling he couldn't quite find words for. Suddenly it wasn't just a plot, instead it had drifted into actuality.

"This is really happening tonight then?"

"Yes, Will." Hannibal stepped forward and snared his beloved in his arms, held him tight and kissed his temple. "All will be well, I promise you that. After tonight the House will have fallen and your friends freed."

"Promise me you'll be safe. Promise me you'll come back to us."

Hannibal cupped Will's cheeks to lock their eyes together and stress the seriousness of the situation. After everything they'd been through since that cold night in Wolf Trap, Hannibal wouldn't let everything go up in smoke now. Price was in position and now it was up to Hannibal to do the bloody part.

"I promise you, Will. You said you wanted to save your friends left behind when you fled, I promise they will be after tonight. I promise I will come back alive and well. I promise you and the twins are safe."

"I'll hold you to those promises." Will smirked which Hannibal found infectious.

"I'd expect nothing less from you, mylimasis."

"Can I at lease have a kiss before you go?"

That was a question that didn't need asking twice. Hannibal kissed him deeply with all the love and devotion he felt for his wonderful omega. Hannibal had expected a solitary existence, and he'd been perfectly accepting of it, but the moment Will had come along everything had changed. Finally there was someone in the world worth sharing his life with, worth sharing the truth of himself with.

"I love you, Will."

"I love you, Hannibal."

Another deep kiss and then Hannibal departed leaving Will to close the front door behind him. He stood there for a moment until Winston padded over knowing his master required comfort – kind-hearted animal. Part of Will wanted to insist he went with his mate but knew Hannibal never would have allowed it and that Hannibal needed to be totally focused on the task at hand.

Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Traditionally, access to the House came with a harsh buzzer but that would create far too much noise and shatter their element of surprise, so Hannibal knocked quietly instead. Rain had begun to fall outside and a chill crept inside when Price quietly opened the door to admit the alpha just as planned. They'd chosen the time they had knowing it was when most of the other guards did there rounds and therefore wouldn't be lingering around the reception. Barney had left to quietly take over the camera duties leaving Price to welcome Hannibal inside.

Over his dark clothing Hannibal had donned a plastic suit which, at first glance, Price had naïvely assumed to be to protect him from the falling rain, yet when he spotted the spatters of blood, he realized it had quite another purpose. This alpha had been so polite and thoughtful, he'd been good to Will and clearly loved him, and that was how Price had let himself forget this alpha intended to kill almost everybody at the House that night. Hannibal Lecter would be a mass murderer by sunrise, although, after seeing the carryall and how prepared Hannibal seemed, it finally dawned on Price that he might have been a serial killer already.

"Did- did the alpha guards see you?"

"They're dead." Came a smooth reply as Hannibal set his bag down on the reception desk and pulled out a knife. "Most were ambushed and their necks snapped, but one did spot me so I was forced to disembowel him."

Every single one of the alpha guards were already dead? The alphas he and all the other guards feared had been systematically picked off by a single man? The House had seen all kinds of monsters and killers, but it had never seen the demon that was Hannibal Lecter before. Suddenly Price was extremely grateful Hannibal was on his side, even if it was too late.

"It's too late, Doctor Lecter." Price's eyes fell to the concrete floor. "Mason said he was ahead of schedule and had Cordell take them forty minutes ago. Brian and Beverly are gone." Tears began to prick in his eyes. "We tried to stall but we couldn't stop them. They're gone."

Hannibal took a moment to absorb the information, this would break Will's heart, but there wasn't anything to be done about it in that moment. Jack's office would likely hold more information he could use to track them down – the things he did for his beloved.

"I'm sorry, Jimmy." How Hannibal's voice remained so calm and collected was a mystery to the beta. "I know this is difficult for you, but we must concentrate on helping the others and eliminating Jack."

Price nodded. "I know. I just wish I'd been stronger – fought harder."

"Had you done that, you would be dead and then Brian, Beverly nor the other kidnapped omegas would have any hope of rescue. You did the right thing even if it doesn't feel like it. We will find them." Hannibal gestured to a door off to the left of the reception desk. "Now, am I to assume that is the door to this so-called library?"

"Yeah," nodded the beta. "Barney is in the camera room and Gideon slinked down to the basement ages ago. Mason is still here though, he's up in Jack's office." Price finally met Hannibal's eyes again then. "There's a new guard basically forced to work here. Josh has only been here a few days, he's just a kid, please don't kill him. He's upstairs."

Hannibal had long suspected that the majority of the beta guards had found themselves at the House in not too dissimilar ways to Price, but most had lost the will to help the omegas long ago. No, in Hannibal's eyes none of these betas were worthy of continuing to draw breath. However, if this new beta had only been there a few days then he couldn't really be held responsible for what was happening, so Hannibal relented and nodded in agreement.

"What does he look like?"

"Mid twenties, blond hair, my height."

Refusing to waste more time, Hannibal made for the library as Price tucked the carryall beneath the desk so it was out of sight. Hannibal wasn't sure what he'd imagined of the House's library, but a room with a few rugs and armchairs wasn't far off the mark, after all the the name had come only from the pathetic bookshelf in one corner. He slipped inside and used the wall to block sight of himself from the rest of the room, he'd expected to find more people inside but there was only a single beta guard screaming down his phone to someone named Lorraine. From the yelling and context, he took Lorraine to be this beta's girlfriend. He lingered in the wall's shadow a few moments before he slowly began to make his way to his prey – the lion looming ever closer to the gazelle.

"She hung up on me!" Somehow the beta seemed surprised screaming down a phone at a woman would make her hang up on him. "That fucking bitch."

Gray eyes caught sight of Hannibal behind him in one of the dusty windows but before the beta could so much as gasp, Hannibal caught him by the throat and snapped his neck. An audible crack Hannibal had long since gone deaf to. Taking his blade to those in his path would have been easier and faster, but messy and more likely to be noticed. No, keeping things neat was better, so Hannibal hauled the dead beta up from the floor and slumped him into a chair as though he were simply asleep. Job done, Hannibal left the library and walked toward the security gate on the reception desk's right knowing Price would follow.

"You killed Shaun, didn't you?"

"If that is who was screaming at a woman via a cellphone, then yes."

Price wasn't surprised by his fellow guard's murder, what surprised him was how calmly and freely Hannibal had admitted to it. He'd not paused in his steps nor had his voice quivered with an ounce of remorse. Price didn't want to devote time to thinking of the danger at his side, so he just unlocked the security gate and slowly followed Hannibal up the steps without a word. Normally ascending the House's stairs came with a shuffled grate as soles brushed against dusty concrete but that didn't happen with Hannibal, he glided up the stairs like some kind of vengeful spectre. Yes, Price was exceedingly grateful Hannibal was on his side.

The higher up he, the stronger that scent of sweat and terrified omega grew. It had Hannibal scrunch his nose up in disgust and made him long to breath in Will. Anger bubbled inside him though he refused to let it show, he wasn't an animal.

As he came to the next security gate he found a ginger-haired beta who instantly reached for his radio – as if Hannibal would let him sound the alarm. Price had no choice but to watch as another of the people he worked with was efficiently removed from that plane of existence. He couldn't call them friends, nobody outside of Barney and the omegas he'd come to care for were his friends. Maybe they'd not been horrible people once upon a time, but they'd long gone numb to the pain and suffering they helped inflict each and ever single day. No, mercy wasn't something they could afford and Hannibal clearly had none to give these people. So, with the ginger dead, Price unlocked the next security gate then followed as Hannibal moved through the hallways assassinating every guard he came across with hand or a knife to the spine and up into the heart. Price would have rather just waited until the deed was done, but the guards weren't all stupid and Hannibal had soon enlisted Price to lure them to spots where he could ambush his prey.

By the time they found Josh, Hannibal had limited the remaining targets to Mason, Jack and Gideon down in the basement. No one had suspected Price of all people would be in on such a carefully planned extermination, so they'd wandered into the slaughterhouse blindly and paid for it. Price had checked each of the omega's rooms weren't in use out of habit and caution; they'd chosen the hour they had because nobody ever came to the House at that time of night, but it never hurt to be vigilant. Josh though, Josh had been a problem. He'd abruptly appeared on a floor he shouldn't have been on, spotted Hannibal dressed for murder and bolted away with a scream. It hadn't taken Hannibal more than a handful of seconds to chase Josh down and pin him to the floor with a blade to his throat as warning while Price quickly and desperately tried to explain what was happening and that he wasn't who they'd come for. The alpha might not have taken issue with killing Josh just like all the others, the beta did though and tried to urge Josh to listen to them. In a way the boy reminded Hannibal of Will, slender and appeared younger than he actually was, scared of every alpha to cross his path and somehow both accepting of death and frightened of it all at the same time.

"… You're going to kill Jack?" Josh finally managed to question which had Price nodding frantically.

"You've been here a few days and you've already seen what he and Mason are capable of. How did you even end up here? You're a kid."

Josh was silent for many moments until he swallowed and the knife nicked his throat sparking an answer alongside the sting.

"At least here there's a roof over my head."

Price shook his head. "Josh, when it comes to the House, the roof is overrated."

Hannibal tended to agree. The House may have provided physical shelter but it was at the cost of one's humanity. He'd read Jack's FBI file, he'd been a good man once who'd slowly descended into the cold depths of greed and evil. Hannibal knew he wasn't a good man, he'd done horrific things and wouldn't disgrace himself by lying to himself, but Hannibal had lines he didn't cross while Jack had jumped over them with gusto.

"What d'you want me to do?"

"Simple, Josh," began Hannibal, his voice level and calm despite how many he'd killed and the knife held to Josh's throat. "Go keep an eye on the reception desk, don't let anyone inside and alert Jimmy if Gideon leaves the basement. Do this and you will live."

Awkwardly, the blond nodded and Hannibal finally let him up. Price encouraged Josh and promised all would be well then watched him shuffle off downstairs. While Price had worried Josh would get scared and go alert Gideon or radio up to Jack and Mason, Hannibal knew he'd proven himself the most terrifying alpha inside the House and that Josh wouldn't risk the ire of an alpha who'd just murdered all his fellow guards. There wasn't any denying Hannibal was the dominant alpha now.

Unsure of if Josh's scream had been heard on the upper floor, Hannibal got them back on track and had made for the stairwell once more intent on getting through that security gate. Right as they made their way up though, they came face to face with Mason on his way down; uselessly it was that moment Barney radioed to Price to inform them of Mason's movements.

"Well, well, who the fuck are you? Naughty boy, you shouldn't be here. Alpha that desperate for a fuck is a bit pathetic, don't you think?"

"Being a little naughty keeps things interesting, surely." Price's confusion was ignored as the two killers chatted with one another. "Besides, I believe I'm right where I should be."

"You're why the guards aren't answering. Let me guess: Jimmy here has finally grown a pair and found an alpha who wants to pretend their powerful. Yeah, that sounds about right. Doesn't matter how strong you are, you can't argue with a gun, so I win."

Mason started to giggle so Hannibal went along with it and breathed out a laugh while Price instinctively backed away fearing a new forecast of the air being significantly more metal than usual.

"Your sister thought she'd won was well, until she met me."

Mason's eye twitched as the Baretta was gripped tighter. "The fuck do you know about Margot?!"

"I'm not normally one to gloat, but I know what she sounded like when she died. I watched her choke on her own blood and prove just how weak she really was."

Suddenly Mason erupted into incoherent swearing and insults as he fired the gun. This was what Hannibal had wanted, he'd been a surgeon for years and knew that, while he couldn't prevent being struck by a bullet, he could control where it struck him, Hannibal just had to provoke Mason into carelessly firing. It had taken exactly the right amount of poking to get just what he'd wanted. The weapon was fired and Hannibal acted instantly, took the unavoidable bullet in the safest place he could, let it rip through flesh knowing there wouldn't be organ or artery damage and just launched up the last few steps to disarm Mason as quickly as possible. It wasn't something he'd recommend but it had needed doing. The gun skidded off down the stairs toward Price as the crazed beta and determined alpha grappled with one another. Hannibal's normally neat hair grew chaotic and fell down over his forehead making him look years younger while Mason scrambled to punch and kick, anything to keep from being pinned down.

The moment that gun had gone off their element of surprise officially ended, Jack had been alerted and surely knew he'd trapped himself in his office, that was why Mason had come down; Mason did the bloody bits. Had Jack suddenly begun regretting his actions or lamenting he'd not put better security protocols in place? In the end it was his desire to make the alphas feel anonymous which had dammed him, which had made it all so simple.

Price swallowed as his eyes flicked between the gun and tussling men. Was he meant to retrieve the gun and shoot Mason? No, he'd never fired a gun before. What if he hit Hannibal?! No, he couldn't

go for the gun, but he couldn't just stand there either. If Mason somehow won all would be lost and Will's children would grow up without their alpha father. Maybe he could just threaten Mason into submission with it? Unsure of what else he could do, Price hurried to the gun yet, when he pointed it toward Mason, he found the man twitching with a knife buried in his throat. Price's mouth fluttered as it tried to force words out but nothing came and soon Mason's twitching came to an end; like an eel had been dancing around inside him, that was the best likeness he'd been able to think of.

Hannibal shuffled to sit on the top step, hair a dusty – and kind of sexy – mess, blood dripping from his mouth and the gunshot wound he didn't seem all that fazed by.

"It would seem Jack and Gideon are the only heads remaining on this hydra." He mussed in that captivating accent of his before he glanced up to the beat. "I think you can put the gun down now, Jimmy."

Finally words managed to force their way passed Price's lips. "You've been shot! Are you okay? Why aren't you freaking out?"

"Because," Hannibal began with a tilt of his head. "I have a lot of adrenaline currently in my bloodstream and know I have no internal damage. I'll admit what I did was risky, though the best option in the moment. I thank you for your concern."

The alpha allowed himself only a momentary breather before he was back on his feet to retrieve his knife. Pain would override the adrenaline soon enough and Hannibal wanted to have ripped Jack's lungs out by the time that happened. Price made quick work of unlocking the last security gate then again lingered while Hannibal ascended the stairs. Unlike the other floors, the top one held only Jack's office and what passed for a small bathroom. It didn't branch off like the other floors either, the stair simply opened out into a narrow hallway with the two rooms on either side. Price was tempted to call it the boss battle but refrained.

With the same silent steps as each other flight of stairs, Hannibal made his way to the top surprisingly unhindered by the hole in him. Things were too quiet, suspiciously quiet after the gunshot and subsequent fight only a little way down the stairs. Two doors opposite one another, just two places Jack could have been laying in wait.

"Am I to assume you aren't going to come out and fight me like a real alpha?" Hannibal goaded just to test the waters, but no response came. "I'll take that as a no."

He made it up the last few steps with audible footfalls and, though he placed his foot on the tiny landing between the two doors, Hannibal didn't actually ascend the step. Price would have asked him why he'd suddenly made so much noise and paused in such a strange position, but he never got the chance. As soon as Jack had heard Hannibal's foot on that top step he fired through his office door in an attempt to wipe Hannibal out; as if a man like Hannibal Lecter would fall for something so obvious.

With a hole in the office door and splintering in the bathroom one, there wasn't any getting away from the impasse they'd reached. Waiting Jack out didn't seem like a wise idea, they had no idea how much ammo he had or if he'd managed to call for backup, and if Hannibal stormed in he'd get a shotgun blast to the chest.

"Who the fuck are you?! What makes you think I'll accept you storming in here?" Jack shouted.

"My name is Doctor Hannibal Lecter." He greeted politely. "Screaming through a door is a little uncouth, don't you think?"

"Fuck you!"

Hannibal couldn't let this linger on forever, he needed to get home to his mate and Gideon surely had to have become aware of what was happening by now.

"So you're master of the House. I doubt you're servant to the poor and butler to the great." Hannibal started as he glanced around in an attempt to form an idea. "You know, I should thank you, Jack. If you hadn't bought Will, and then hadn't let Beverly steal your key so easily, I never would have met him. There are numerous reasons you should die, Jack, you're probably extremely aware of that." A fire extinguisher tucked in the corner just behind Price in the stairwell caught Hannibal's attention then and inspiration came. "However, my reason is a very specific one. Will Graham. You used him without a care for his emotional or mental well-being." Hannibal grabbed the extinguisher and took the gun from Price, then shuffled toward the office door so he couldn't be seen through the hole. "You pumped him full of damaging drugs and treated him like a tool to get you what you wanted. That was rude."

Unwilling to drag things out further, Hannibal tossed the extinguisher through the hole and quickly fired. Television had left most thinking shooting an car engine or an extinguisher caused it to blow up with a vast dramatic flare, but that wasn't true. The extinguisher didn't explode sending shrapnel everywhere, but it did cause the powder to erupt into a dense cloud. In hardly a moment Hannibal had kicked the door open, Jack fired again but missed only to be punched square in the face and knocked back against his desk.

Price watched as the cloud started to disperse, he had no other choice but to watch. Hannibal sliced deeply at Jack's abdomen causing intestine to spill forth. Blood mixed with ABC powder like some kind of slaughter in the snow. Organs stuck to it as though they'd been dipped into flour in preparation for frying. This was it, this was the end of the House, this was the end of Jack Crawford and his trafficking of innocent omegas, of his voracity. This was what he'd wanted, he'd just never realized it would be so bloody – That was a lie, Price had always known just how bloody and visceral it would be, he'd just lied to himself about it. Lying had allowed him to pretend he'd not assisted in so many deaths, had let him think it was a rescue mission for the grater good when really it was just more death and revenge. He had to watch, had to bear witness to what he'd orchestrated. He'd always known the guards and Jack wouldn't just lay down and wait for police, knew police wasn't an option. No, Price had always known the House would be a slaughterhouse before dawn, he'd helped turn it into one even if he'd not physically killed anybody. Part of him wanted to proclaim Hannibal evil, a devil no better than Jack, but he couldn't bring himself to. Hannibal might have been a monster, but he was the monster those trapped at the House needed. He'd said they'd get Brian and Beverly back, that was what Price needed to hold onto now.

Soon Hannibal had Jack flat on his desk gasping for air as his organs poured out of him – a sacrifice on an alter. Jack knew he'd been beaten, the betas had always obeyed him because he was the dominant alpha, but clearly that dominant alpha was Hannibal now. Jack had always been strong with an imposing presence but Hannibal was something else entirely; couldn't even be certain he was human.

"… What are you planning to do now then?" Jack glared up at his killer refusing to look weak even when facing his end.

Hannibal didn't need to hear fear in Jack's voice, he could smell it in the man's blood and sweat, see it twinkle in his dulling eyes. He leaned down so he could whisper in Jack's ear, Price didn't need to hear the next bit, had already got enough to try to process.

"I'm going to rip out your organs and then make dinner for those scared, hungry omegas. You fed off them for years, now they're going to feed off you. What remains I'll lay at my mate's feet as an offering." Hannibal straightened back up. "This is for my William."

Without an ounce of hesitation Hannibal drew his hungry blade across Jack's throat deep enough to sever the jugular vein and carotid artery. He'd bleed out rapidly and death wouldn't take all that long, but he'd feel every second of it and be forced to watch Hannibal just stare at him, to see a doctor stand by and allow his death.

Once the light had finally faded from Jack's dark eyes and the spurts of blood had slowed to a tragic trickle, Hannibal looked over his shoulder to Price and placed the gun down on the desk.

"Gather Barney and Josh, then begin moving the bodies down to the basement. Simply stack them, I shall deal with them later."

"What about Gideon? He's down there."

Hannibal nodded. "Yes, he is our remaining loose end. Gather the bodies as I say, I'll deal with Gideon myself."

Price didn't ask more questions, didn't want to know what would be done to Gideon after what he'd seen happen to Jack.

The hours stretched on after that, Price went room to room explaining what had happened to the omegas in the least graphic words he could, while Barney and Josh worked on moving all the bodies, including those from outside, to the basement as Hannibal had ordered. Things would change drastically in the next few days but something wouldn't; an alpha was in charge and the betas watched over the House and omegas within.

THE END.

'He who fights with monsters might take care, lest he threreby become a monster. And if you gaze for so long into an abyss, the abyss gazes also into you.'
Frederick Nitezche

'Death is the wish of some, the relief of others and the end to all.'
Lucian Seneca

Chapter End Notes

Part 2, Raspberry, will begin being posted on Monday. 09/23/24

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